





*Smits*

Study Text III

MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

Commentary on the Apostolic Letters  
of Pope Paul VI  
*Ministeria quaedam* and *Ad  
pascendum*

1974

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English translation of the

*Rite of Institution of Readers and Acolytes*  
*Admission to Candidacy for the Diaconate and*  
*Presbyterate, Commitment to Celibacy,*  
*and Mass for the Ministers of the Church*

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# Introduction

The concept of ministry and ministerial diversification within the Catholic Church are beginning to experience a second spring. The invigorating life of the Spirit has stirred up new expressions of vitality. Reaffirming its ministerial nature, the Church has begun to stretch in new and exciting directions.

Study Text III, *Ministries in the Church*, considers the most recent official stirrings in the area of ministry: the apostolic letters *Ad pascendum* and *Ministeria quaedam*.

Part one, "The Development of Ministries in the Church," is a historical scenario leading the reader to the commentary on the new ministries of reader and acolyte, as well as the rite of admission to candidacy for orders—something which is both related to and quite distinct from the lay ministries.

The complete rites for institution are included in this text. Those preparing to be instituted in these ministries will want to study them carefully, reflectively, and prayerfully.

The roles of reader and acolyte in the Church are primarily cultic ministries, but the Church's call to ministry must push far beyond the sanctuary. The recent apostolic letters only provide us with a starting point. The future is unprogrammed.

This study text is third in the series issued by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy. Designed as a practical means of continuing education in the field of liturgy it makes current material available for use on an individual or group basis.

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I. Holy Communion: Commentary on the Instruction *Immensae Caritatis*.

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**Apostolic Letter**  
**In *Motu Proprio* Form**  
**By Which the Discipline of First**  
**Tonsure, Minor Orders, and**  
**Subdiaconate in the Latin Church**  
**is Reformed**

Even in the most ancient times certain ministries were established by the Church for the purpose of suitably giving worship to God and for offering service to the people of God according to their needs. By these ministries, duties of a liturgical and charitable nature, deemed suitable to varying circumstances, were entrusted to the performance of the faithful. The conferring of these functions often took place by a special rite, in which, after God's blessing had been implored, a Christian was established in a special class or rank for the fulfillment of some ecclesiastical function.

Some of these functions, which were more closely connected with the liturgical celebration, slowly came to be considered as preparatory institutions for the reception of sacred orders, so that the offices of porter, exorcist, and acolyte were called minor orders in the Latin Church in relation to the subdiaconate, diaconate, and presbyterate, which were called major orders. Generally, though not everywhere, these minor orders were reserved to those who received them on their way to the priesthood.

Nevertheless, since the minor orders have not always been the same and many tasks connected with them, as at present, have also been exercised by the laity, it seems fitting to reexamine this practice and to adapt it to contemporary needs, so that what is obsolete in these offices may be removed, what is useful retained, what is necessary defined, and at the same time what is required of candidates for holy orders may be determined.

While the Second Vatican Council was in preparation, many pastors of the Church requested that the minor orders and subdiaconate should be reexamined. Although the Council did not decree anything concerning this for the Latin Church, it enunciated certain principles for solving the question. There is no doubt that the norms laid down by the Council regarding the general and orderly renewal of the liturgy<sup>1</sup> also include those areas which concern ministries in the liturgical assembly, so that from the very arrangement of the celebration the Church clearly appears structured in different orders and ministries.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Second Vatican Council decreed that "in liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by the nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy."<sup>3</sup>

With this assertion is closely connected what was written a little before in the same constitution: "Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people' (1 Peter 2:9; cf. 2:4-5) is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit. Therefore, through the needed program of instruction, pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it in all their pastoral work."<sup>4</sup>

In the preservation of certain offices and in their adaptation to contemporary needs, there are those which are especially connected with the ministries of the word and of the altar and in the Latin Church are called the offices of reader and acolyte and the subdiaconate. It is fitting to preserve and adapt these in such a way, that from this time on there will be two offices: that of reader and that of acolyte, which will include the functions of the subdiaconate.

Besides the offices common to the Latin Church, there is nothing to prevent episcopal conferences from requesting others of the Apostolic See, if they judge the establishment of such

offices in their region to be necessary or very useful because of special reasons. To these belong, for example, the offices of porter, exorcist, and catechist,<sup>5</sup> as well as other offices to be conferred upon those who are dedicated to works of charity, where this service has not been given to deacons.

It is in accordance with the reality itself and with the contemporary outlook that the above-mentioned ministries should no longer be called minor orders; their conferring will not be called “ordination,” but “institution.” Only those, however, who have received the diaconate will be properly known as clerics. Thus there will better appear the distinction between clergy and laity, between what is proper and reserved to the clergy and what can be entrusted to the laity; thus there will appear more clearly their mutual relationship insofar as “the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, while they differ in essence and not only in degree, are nevertheless interrelated. Each of them shares in its own special way in the one priesthood of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

Having weighed every aspect of the question well, having sought the opinion of experts, having consulted with the episcopal conferences and taken their views into account, and having taken counsel with our venerable brothers who are members of the Sacred Congregations competent in this matter, by our apostolic authority we enact the following norms, derogating—if and insofar as necessary—from provisions of the Code of Canon Law now in force, and we promulgate them with this letter.

I. First tonsure is no longer conferred; entrance into the clerical state is joined to the diaconate.

II. What up to now were called minor orders are henceforth called “ministries.”

III. Ministries may be committed to lay Christians; hence they are no longer to be considered as reserved to candidates for the sacrament of orders.

IV. Two ministries, adapted to present-day needs, are to be preserved in the whole of the Latin Church, namely those of *readers* and *acolytes*. The functions heretofore committed to the subdeacon are entrusted to the reader and the acolyte; conse-

quently, the major order of subdiaconate no longer exists in the Latin Church. There is nothing, however, to prevent the acolyte being also called a subdeacon in some places, if the episcopal conference judges it opportune.

V. The reader is appointed for a function proper to him, that of reading the word of God in the liturgical assembly. Accordingly, he is to read the lessons from sacred scripture, except for the gospel, in the Mass and other sacred celebrations; he is to recite the psalm between the readings when there is no psalmist; he is to present the intentions for the general intercessions in the absence of a deacon or cantor; he is to direct the singing and the participation by the faithful; he is to instruct the faithful for the worthy reception of the sacraments. He may also, insofar as necessary, take care of preparing other faithful who by a temporary appointment are to read the scriptures in liturgical celebrations. That he may more fittingly and perfectly fulfill these functions, let him meditate assiduously on sacred scripture.

Let the reader be aware of the office he has undertaken and make every effort and employ suitable means to acquire that increasingly warm and living love<sup>7</sup> and knowledge of the scriptures that will make him a more perfect disciple of the Lord.

VI. The acolyte is appointed in order to aid the deacon and to minister to the priest. It is therefore his duty to attend to the service of the altar and to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially in the celebration of Mass; he is also to distribute holy communion as an extraordinary minister when the ministers spoken of in canon 845 of the Code of Canon Law are not available or are prevented by ill health, age, or another pastoral ministry from performing this function, or when the number of those approaching the sacred table is so great that the celebration of Mass would be unduly prolonged.

In the same extraordinary circumstances he may be entrusted with publicly exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration by the faithful and afterwards replacing it, but not with blessing the people. He may also, to the extent needed, take care of instructing other faithful who by temporary appointment assist the priest or deacon in liturgical celebrations by carrying the missal, cross, candles, etc., or by performing other such



duties. He will perform these functions the more worthily if he participates in the holy eucharist with increasingly fervent piety, receives nourishment from it and deepens his knowledge of it.

Destined as he is in a special way for the service of the altar, the acolyte should learn all matters concerning public divine worship and strive to grasp their inner spiritual meaning: in that way he will be able each day to offer himself entirely to God, be an example to all by his seriousness and reverence in the sacred building, and have a sincere love for the Mystical Body of Christ, the people of God, especially the weak and the sick.

VII. In accordance with the venerable tradition of the Church, institution in the ministries of readers and acolytes is reserved to men.

VIII. The following are requirements for admission to the ministries:

a) the presentation of the petition freely made out and signed by the aspirant to the ordinary (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior) who has the right to accept the petition;

b) a suitable age and special qualities to be determined by the episcopal conference;

c) a firm will to give faithful service to God and the Christian people.

IX. The ministries are conferred by the ordinary (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior) according to the liturgical rite *De Institutione Lectoris* and *De Institutione Acolyths* revised by the Apostolic See.

X. Intervals, determined by the Holy See or the episcopal conferences, shall be observed between the conferring of the ministries of readers and acolytes whenever more than one ministry is conferred on the same person.

XI. Candidates for the diaconate and priesthood are to receive the ministries of reader and acolyte, unless they have already done so, and are to exercise them for a fitting time, in order to be better disposed for the future service of the word and of the altar. Dispensation from the reception of these ministries on the part of such candidates is reserved to the Holy See.

XII. The conferring of ministries does not imply the right to sustenance or salary from the Church.

XIII. The rite of institution of readers and acolytes is to be published soon by the competent department of the Roman Curia.

These norms shall come into effect on January 1, 1973.

We order that what we have decreed in this letter, in *motu proprio* form, be established and ratified, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1972, the tenth of our pontificate.

PAUL PP. VI

<sup>1</sup> See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 62: *AAS* 56 (1964), No. 117: See also No. 21: *loc. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>2</sup> See Ordo Missae, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, No. 58, typical edition, 1969, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 28: *AAS* 56 (1964), 107.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 14: *loc. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> See Second Vatican Council, decree *Ad Gentes*, No. 15: *AAS* 58 (1966), 965; *ibid.*, No. 17: *loc. cit.*, pp. 967-968.

<sup>6</sup> Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, No. 10: *AAS* 57 (1965), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, No. 24: *AAS* 56 (1964), 107; dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, No. 25: *AAS* 58 (1966), 829.



# Apostolic Letter

## In *Motu Proprio* Form

### Laying Down Certain Norms Regarding the Holy Order of Deacons

For the nurturing and constant growth of the people of God, Christ the Lord instituted in the Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body.<sup>1</sup>

From the apostolic age the diaconate has had a clearly outstanding position among these ministries, and it has always been held in great honor by the Church. Explicit testimony of this is given by the Apostle Saint Paul both in his letter to the Philippians, in which he sends his greetings not only to the bishops but also to the deacons,<sup>2</sup> and in a letter to Timothy, in which he illustrates the qualities and virtues that deacons must have in order to be worthy of their ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Later, when the early writers of the Church acclaim the dignity of deacons, they do not fail to extol also the spiritual qualities and virtues that are required for the performance of that ministry, namely, fidelity to Christ, moral integrity, and obedience to the bishop.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch declares that the office of the deacon is nothing other than “the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages and has been manifested in the final time.”<sup>4</sup> He also made the following observation: “The deacons too, who are ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should please all in every way; for they are not servants of food and drink, but ministers of the Church of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Saint Polycarp of Smyrna exhorts deacons to “be moderate in all things, merciful, diligent, living according to the truth of

the Lord, who became the servant of all.”<sup>6</sup> The author of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, recalling the words of Christ, “Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant,”<sup>7</sup> addresses the following fraternal exhortation to deacons: “Accordingly you deacons also should behave in such a way that, if your ministry obliges you to lay down your lives for a brother, you should do so . . . If the Lord of heaven and earth served us and suffered and sustained everything on our behalf, should not this be done for our brothers all the more by us, since we are imitators of him and have been given the place of Christ?”<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, when the writers of the first centuries insist on the importance of the deacons’ ministry, they give many examples of the manifold important tasks entrusted to them and clearly show how much authority they held in the Christian communities and how great was their contribution to the apostolate. The deacon is described as “the bishop’s ear, mouth, heart and soul.”<sup>9</sup> The deacon is at the disposal of the bishop in order that he may serve the whole people of God and take care of the sick and the poor;<sup>10</sup> he is correctly and rightly called “one who shows love for orphans, for the devout and for the widowed, one who is fervent in spirit, one who shows love for what is good.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he is entrusted with the mission of taking the holy eucharist to the sick confined to their homes,<sup>12</sup> of conferring baptism,<sup>13</sup> and of attending to preaching the word of God in accordance with the express will of the bishop.

Accordingly, the diaconate flourished in a wonderful way in the Church and at the same time gave an outstanding witness of love for Christ and the brethren through the performance of works of charity,<sup>14</sup> the celebration of sacred rites,<sup>15</sup> and the fulfillment of pastoral duties.<sup>16</sup>

The exercise of the office of deacon enabled those who were to become priests to give proof of themselves, to display the merit of their work, and to acquire preparation—all of which were requirements for receiving the dignity of the priesthood and the office of pastor.

As time went on, the discipline concerning this holy order was changed. The prohibition against conferring ordination without observing the established sequence of orders was strengthened, and there was a gradual decrease in the number

of those who preferred to remain deacons all their lives instead of advancing to a higher order. As a consequence, the permanent diaconate almost entirely disappeared in the Latin Church. It is scarcely the place to mention the decrees of the Council of Trent proposing to restore the holy orders in accordance with their own nature as ancient functions within the Church;<sup>17</sup> it was much later that the idea matured of restoring this important order also as a truly permanent rank. Our predecessor Pius XII briefly alluded to this matter.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the Second Vatican Council supported the wishes and requests that, where such would lead to the good of souls, the permanent diaconate should be restored as an intermediate order between the higher ranks of the Church's hierarchy and the rest of the people of God, as an expression of the needs and desires of the Christian communities, as a driving force for the Church's service or *diaconia* towards the local Christian communities, and as a sign or sacrament of the Lord Christ himself, who "came not to be served but to serve."<sup>19</sup>

For this reason, at the third session of the Council, in October 1964, the Fathers ratified the principle of the renewal of the diaconate and in the following November the dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* was promulgated. In article 29 of this document a description is given of the principal characteristics proper to that state: "At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed 'not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service.' For strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his presbyterium, they serve the people of God in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity."<sup>20</sup>

The same constitution made the following declaration about permanency in the rank of deacon: "These duties [of deacons], so very necessary for the life of the Church, can in many areas be fulfilled only with difficulty according to the prevailing discipline of the Latin Church. For this reason, the diaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy."<sup>21</sup>

However, this restoration of the permanent diaconate required that the instructions of the Council be more profoundly examined and that there be mature deliberation concerning the

juridical status of both the celibate and married deacon. Similarly it was necessary that matters connected with the diaconate of those who are to become priests should be adapted to contemporary conditions, so that the time of diaconate would furnish that proof of life, of maturity, and of aptitude for the priestly ministry which ancient discipline demanded from candidates for the priesthood.

Thus on June 18, 1967, we issued in *motu proprio* form, the apostolic letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, by which suitable canonical norms for the permanent diaconate were established.<sup>22</sup> On June 17 of the following year, through the apostolic constitution *Pontificalis Romani Recognitio*,<sup>23</sup> we authorized the new rite for the conferring of the sacred orders of diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate, and at the same time defined the matter and the form of the ordination itself.

Now that we are proceeding further and are today promulgating the apostolic letter *Ministeria quaedam*, we consider it fitting to issue certain norms concerning the diaconate. We also desire that candidates for the diaconate should know what ministries they are to exercise before sacred ordination and when and how they are to take upon themselves the responsibilities of celibacy and liturgical prayer.

Since entrance into the clerical state is deferred until diaconate, there no longer exists the rite of first tonsure, by which a layman used to become a cleric. But a new rite is introduced, by which one who aspires to the diaconate or presbyterate publicly manifests his will to offer himself to God and the Church, so that he may exercise a sacred order. The Church, accepting this offering, selects and calls him to prepare himself to receive a sacred order, and in this way he is properly numbered among candidates for the diaconate or priesthood.

It is especially fitting that the ministries of reader and acolyte should be entrusted to those who, as candidates for the order of diaconate or priesthood, desire to devote themselves to God and to the Church in a special way. For the Church, which “does not cease to take the bread of life from the table of the word of God and the body of Christ and offer it to the faithful”<sup>24</sup> considers it to be very opportune that both by study and by



gradual exercise of the ministry of the word and of the altar candidates for sacred orders should through intimate contact understand and reflect upon the double aspect of the priestly office. Thus it comes about that the authenticity of the ministry shines out with the greatest effectiveness. In this way the candidates approach holy orders fully aware of their vocation, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, constant in prayer, and aware of the needs of the faithful.<sup>25</sup>

Having weighed every aspect of the question well, having sought the opinion of experts, having consulted with the episcopal conferences and taken their views into account, and having taken counsel with our venerable brothers who are members of the Sacred Congregations competent in this matter, by our apostolic authority we enact the following norms, derogating—if and insofar as necessary—from provisions of the Code of Canon Law until now in force, and we promulgate them with this letter.

- I. a) A rite of admission for candidates to the diaconate and to the presbyterate is introduced. In order that this admission be properly made, the free petition of the aspirant, made out and signed in his own hand, is required, as well as the written acceptance of the competent ecclesiastical superior, by which the selection by the Church is brought about.

Professed members of clerical congregations who seek the priesthood are not bound to this rite.

- b) The competent superior for this acceptance is the ordinary (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior). Those can be accepted who give signs of an authentic vocation and, endowed with good moral qualities and free from mental and physical defects, wish to dedicate their lives to the service of the Church for the glory of God and the good of souls. It is necessary that those who aspire to the transitional diaconate will have completed at least their twentieth year and have begun their course of theological studies.
- c) In virtue of the acceptance the candidate must care for his vocation in a special way and foster it. He

also acquires the right to the necessary spiritual assistance by which he can develop his vocation and submit unconditionally to the will of God.

- II. Candidates for the permanent or transitional diaconate and for the presbyterate are to receive the ministries of reader and acolyte, unless they have already done so, and are to exercise them for a fitting time, in order to be better disposed for the future service of the word and of the altar. Dispensation from the reception of these ministries on the part of such candidates is reserved to the Holy See.
- III. The liturgical rites by which admission of candidates for the diaconate and the presbyterate takes place and the above-mentioned ministries are conferred should be performed by the ordinary of the aspirant (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior).
- IV. The intervals established by the Holy See or by the episcopal conferences between the conferring—during the course of theological studies—of the ministry of readers and that of acolytes, and between the ministry of acolytes and the order of deacons must be observed.
- V. Before ordination candidates for the diaconate shall give to the ordinary (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior) a declaration made out and signed in their own hand, by which they testify that they are about to receive the order freely and of their own accord.
- VI. The special consecration of celibacy observed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and its obligation for candidates to the priesthood and for unmarried candidates to the diaconate are linked with the diaconate. The public commitment to holy celibacy before God and the Church is to be celebrated in a particular rite, even by religious, and it is to precede ordination to the diaconate. Celibacy taken on in this way is a diriment impediment to entering marriage.

In accordance with the traditional discipline of the church, a married deacon who has lost his wife cannot enter a new marriage.<sup>26</sup>



- VII. a) Deacons called to the priesthood are not to be ordained until they have completed the course of studies prescribed by the norms of the Apostolic See.
- b) In regard to the course of theological studies to precede the ordination of permanent deacons, the episcopal conferences, with attention to the local situation, will issue the proper norms and submit them for the approval of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education.
- VIII. In accordance with norms 29-30 of the General Instruction for the Liturgy of the Hours:
- a) Deacons called to the priesthood are bound by their sacred ordination to the obligation of celebrating the liturgy of the hours;
- b) it is most fitting that permanent deacons should recite daily at least a part of the liturgy of the hours, to be determined by the episcopal conference.
- IX. Entrance into the clerical state and incardination into a diocese are brought about by ordination to the diaconate.
- X. The rite of admission for candidates to the diaconate and priesthood and of the special consecration of holy celibacy is to be published soon by the competent department of the Roman Curia.

TRANSITIONAL NORMS. Candidates for the sacrament of orders who have already received first tonsure before the promulgation of this letter, retain all the duties, rights and privileges of clerics. Those who have been promoted to the order of subdiaconate are held to the obligations taken on in regard to both celibacy and the liturgy of the hours. But they must celebrate once again their public commitment to celibacy before God and the Church by the new special rite preceding ordination to the diaconate.

All that has been decreed by us in this letter, in *motu proprio* form, we order to be confirmed and ratified, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. We also determine that it shall come into force on January 1, 1973.

Given in Rome at Saint Peter's, on August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1972, the tenth of our pontificate.

## PAUL PP. VI

<sup>1</sup> See Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, No. 18: *AAS* 57 (1965), 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> See Philippians 1:1.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ad Magnesios*, VI, 1: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. X. Funk, I (Tübingen, 1901), p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Trallianos*, II, 3: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. X. Funk, I (Tübingen, 1901), p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> *Epistula Ad Philippenses*, V, 2: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. X. Funk, I (Tübingen, 1901), pp. 301-303.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 20:26-27.

<sup>8</sup> *Didascalia Apostolorum*, III, 13, 2-4: *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, ed. F. X. Funk, I (Paderborn, 1906), p. 214.

<sup>9</sup> *Didascalia Apostolorum*, II, 44, 4; ed. F. X. Funk, I, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> See *Traditio Apostolica*, 39 and 34; *La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte, Essai de reconstitution* by B. Botte (Münster, 1963), pp. 87 and 81.

<sup>11</sup> *Testamentum D. N. Iesu Christi*, I, 38; edited and translated into Latin by I. E. Rahmani (Mainz, 1899), p. 93.

<sup>12</sup> See Saint Justin, *Apologia* I, 65, 5 and 67, 5: Saint Justin, *Apologiae duae*; ed. G. Rauschen (Bonn, 1911<sup>2</sup>), pp. 107 and 111.

<sup>13</sup> See Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, XVII, 1: *Corpus Christianorum*, I, *Tertulliani Opera*, pars I, (Turnholt, 1954), p. 291.

<sup>14</sup> See *Didascalia Apostolorum*, II, 31, 2: ed. F. X. Funk, I, p. 112; cf. *Testamentum D. N. Iesu Christi*, I, 31: edited and translated into Latin by I. E. Rahmani (Mainz, 1899), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> See *Didascalia Apostolorum*, II, 57, 6; 58, 1: ed. F. X. Funk, I, pp. 162 and 166.

<sup>16</sup> See Saint Cyprian, *Epistolae XV* and *XVI*: ed. G. Hartel (Vienna, 1871), pp. 513-520; cf. Saint Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, I, cap. I, 1: PL 40, 309-310.

<sup>17</sup> Session XXIII, capp. I-IV: *Mansi*, XXXIII, 138-140.

<sup>18</sup> Address to the Participants in the Second International Congress of the Lay Apostolate, October 5, 1957; *AAS* 49 (1957), 925.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 20:28.

<sup>20</sup> *AAS* 57 (1965) 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *AAS* 59 (1967), 697-704.

<sup>23</sup> *AAS* 60 (1968), 369-373.

<sup>24</sup> See Second Vatican Council, dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, no. 21: *AAS* 58 (1966), 827.

<sup>25</sup> See Romans 12:11-13.

<sup>26</sup> See Paul VI, apostolic letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem*, no. 16: *AAS* 59 (1967), 701.

# Pastoral Commentary

## I

### The Development of Ministries in the Church

One of the signs of the dynamic life of the Church today is the development of new forms of ministry—the witness of a Church eager to make itself seen and felt in the world of man and the evidence of a greening after a long winter of introspection. One can feel this surge of vitality in new concerns for the marginal man and the stigmatized, experimental approaches to pastoral and ecumenical teamwork, a rediscovery of the importance of religious education for the adult Christian, and the use of socioeconomic and political activity as ministry—to mention but a few.

The ecclesiastical structure of ministry is adjusting to this surge of vitality. While old ministries are sharpened and given clearer recognition, the way is open to the formal acceptance of other public ministries. We have seen the suppression of the minor orders of the clergy and the subdiaconate as steps to the priesthood, the restoration of the permanent diaconate for married men, and the institution of the office of reader and acolyte as specific lay ministries. At first glance, it looks as if the Church is arbitrarily reshuffling its traditional ministerial structure, but in reality it is responding to a not-so-subtle adjustment in the theology of ministry. At the risk of over-simplification, we shall highlight some of the historical developments in this theology of ministry.

There are two exaggerations to be avoided in reviewing the practice and structure of ministry in the New Testament: (1) the New Testament is a unified document which presents a clear and fully developed picture of Church order and Church ministry; and (2) New Testament ministry, inspired by the freshness of the Easter experience and animated by the promised

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MINISTRY IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT  
—DIALECTICAL AND  
FLEXIBLE

Spirit, is completely unstructured. In reality, ministry in the New Testament is characterized by on-going development through creative tension between the spontaneous and charismatic on the one hand and the legislative and custodial on the other. In early New Testament times, the charismatic was predominant. In later New Testament times the emphasis was on guarding the tradition, but neither approach excluded the other. In a word, New Testament ministry was a growth process searching for flexible structures to meet the needs of the Church, help it to adjust to its new environments and keep it faithful to the Gospel with its ideal of Christian service.

Biblical scholars have been peeling away the layers of history, culture, language, and theology in the New Testament in order to understand better the early Church experiences. One can only summarize some of their findings related to ministry:

- the Gospels indicate that Jesus gave his disciples few instructions about how to organize the Christian community;

- the first leaders of the Jerusalem community introduced flexible structures of ministry in order to serve the needs of all segments of the growing Church;

- the Twelve recognized that they could guide the Church in carrying out its ministry of reconciliation only by creating a flexible Church order;

- the apostles recognized and encouraged the variety of spiritual gifts present within the body of Christ;

- it is clear that the earliest books of the New Testament present a rich diversity of ministries for laymen and laywomen, and some of these ministries were not formalized by the laying on of hands;

- it was only in the later New Testament era when the Churches were reflecting on their traditions and searching for canons of belief that fixed, empirical criteria of the apostolic office so familiar to us would be formulated;

- it is doubtful that a single ecclesiastical office remains today in the same form as the New Testament Churches employed it.



In conclusion, the development of offices in the apostolic Church did not follow any single pattern, and the small amount of material in the New Testament on this subject makes it difficult to determine the historical modes which guided such development.

The later developments of ministry within the Church were influenced by a set of factors entirely different from those operative in the New Testament Church: the fading immediacy of the Easter experience, the gradual realization that the second coming of Jesus was not at hand, the numerical and geographic/cultural growth of the Church, civil organizational structures, the response of the Church to persecution and religious freedom, and the general human tendency to institutionalize a charism and surround it with juridical norms and procedures.

Before long, the presbyteral ministry began to incorporate the functions of other ministries and, as a consequence, to create a rather clear division between “minister” and “those ministered to.” For example, in the 3rd and 4th centuries there was, as we will explain later, a widespread development of so-called “minor orders”—door-keeper, exorcist, lector, and acolyte. These orders developed as lay ministries designed to serve a real need, and before long some form of public and ecclesiastical recognition was deemed appropriate. But within the course of time these lay ministries disappeared into the presbyteral one. The diaconate suffered the same fate and, over a long period of time, all of these separate formal ministries became stepping stones to, and were included in, the priesthood.

The healthy dialectic and flexibility of the New Testament and the creative tension they produced prevented the small early Church from becoming stagnant. The dissident reformers in the 16th century provided the Church with a challenging opportunity to regain a sense of balance between charism and office, spontaneity and structure, lay involvement and clerical control.

Unfortunately for all of Christianity, the excesses of the reformers produced an inflexible stubbornness in the Church authorities rather than creative tension. On the one hand, the reformers freed the layman from his bonds to Church authority

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LATER DEVELOPMENTS—  
TOWARD CLERICALIZATION

3

THE REFORMATION—  
SETTING UP THE  
DEFENSES

and did away with ecclesiastical class distinctions. They attacked the clerical priesthood and proclaimed the universal priesthood of the whole Church. On the other hand, the official Catholic Church authorities and their theologians reacted by defending the clerical priesthood and focusing so intensely on the Eucharist that other aspects of ministry developed slowly. Thus, what could well have been a healthy dialectic turned out to be a retreat into rigid positions, the effects of which are only now being removed.

It took the Catholic Church a long time to get over its defensiveness and to examine ministry with an unjaundiced eye in the light of historical research and contemporary needs. In the 1930's we saw the call to Catholic *social action* built on the premise that the Church must be involved legitimately in such matters as peace, justice, housing, and education as a preparation for the actual implementation of the Gospel. Such Catholic social action, it was hypothesized, would do much to break down the barriers of suspicion and mistrust so that people would neither be kept from approaching the Church nor be tempted to leave the Church. Once people would see the Church's interest in the concrete problems associated with their lives, the work of preaching the Gospel and worshipping God in sacrament could be approached more formally.

In the 1940's and 1950's we saw the development of the *lay apostolate* which was defined as the participation of the laity in the work of the hierarchy. The lay apostolate was built on the premise that ministry was both the responsibility and the domain of the clerical Church and the laity were invited to share in this privilege and responsibility through service in the world.

And in the 1960's, we saw the development of *lay ministry* which is built on the premise that ministry is the privilege and responsibility of the total Church and everyone is called by baptism to exercise it, each in his own way and according to his own call and gifts.

As a result of this more recent emphasis on the theology of ministry the five main functions of ministry—teaching, preaching, celebrating, organizing, and individual pastoral care—are no



longer the exclusive domain of the ordained minister although some aspects require the Sacrament of Orders.

It is within this broad development of ministry, which can be represented as a jagged line rather than a straight one, that the new lay ministries in the Church should be reviewed. They are an attempt on the part of the Church to put into practice the theology of ministry developed amid dialectic and creative tension at the Second Vatican Council.



## II

# The Institution of Readers and Acolytes

Until January of 1973, the Latin Church celebrated the ordination of clerics to the minor orders: reader, acolyte, porter, and exorcist. While the service was taken seriously, practically everyone felt an uneasiness about these pre-sacerdotal steps. The young clerics (they had all been tonsured) took the orders as just so many necessary mini-steps toward the giant steps of major orders (subdiaconate, diaconate) which led to the priesthood.

The faithful could hardly see the minor orders in any other light. The young men had all served Mass as boys, so why “acolytes” now? Lectors? They had all read during the liturgy (at least during these post-Vatican II days). The parish had a capable sacristan and a faithful group of ushers. Why “door-keeper”—these lads? And exorcists?

What was felt by cleric and layman alike—though not always expressed in just so many words—was a certain liturgical anachronism. These rites and orders belonged to another era. They no longer seemed necessary; indeed, the graces and gifts petitioned for during the service did not correspond to the functional situation. The young clerics would certainly not be door-keepers or exorcists! Ultimately, it seems the ordination could only be reduced to any empty form! Corresponding to nothing in the vital life of the Church, they served as useless sign posts to a distant past.

The need for a revision of the ordination rites was recognized by the Fathers of Vatican Council II. In view of the complexity of the matter, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy could do no more than laconically state: “Both the ceremonies and texts of the ordination rites are to be revised.”

Before the end of the second century there is no mention in any of the extant historical documents of any so-called "orders" below that of diaconate. Bishop, presbyter, and deacon are consistently adverted to as the ministers of the Church.

Tertullian (160-230) is the first to mention the presence of an officially recognized lector or reader in the community (*Depraescr.* 41). From then on the presence of the lector has been attested to in the Churches of the West as well as of the East.

The existence of the other three minor orders is known best from the rather detailed description that Pope St. Cornelius (c. 250) gave of the Church in Rome in his letter to his friend Fabius. He enumerates the clergy of Rome: 1 bishop; 46 priests (presbyters); 7 deacons; 7 subdeacons; 42 acolytes; 52 exorcists, readers and Church maintenance personnel (*ostiarii*) (*Eusebuis. Hist. eccl.* VI, 43, no. 11).

The Gelasian Sacramentary, a papal Mass book with formulas dating from the fourth-fifth centuries, speaks of the same ministerial structure of the Church in the solemn prayers for Good Friday (Mohlberg, nos. 404, 405).

By the early part of the seventh century the role of the exorcist and doorkeeper had disappeared in the city of Rome. No mention is made of the two orders in the official liturgical documents (M. Andrieu. "Les ordres mineurs dans l'ancien rite romain," *Revue de sciences religieuses*, 5 [1925] 253).

Some explanation must be sought for this disappearance. With the decrease in adult catechumens the need for baptismal preparation with its cycle of ritual exorcisms had decreased proportionately. These exorcisms had been the concern of the official exorcists. (See M. Andrieu. *Ordines Romani* nos. 11, 35).

It is possible that the absence of a group of adult catechumens and the official recognition of the Christian religion affected the ministerial role of the doorkeeper.

In the tenth century the orders had been added to the Germanic liturgy—not out of any pastoral necessity or utility but artificially. By the twelfth century when the liturgy had made

the full circuit from Rome to Gaul, to Germany and back to Rome, the two orders which were no longer conferred in Rome were reintroduced there.

Outside Rome, yet in the West, the ministries were not exclusively limited to the traditional four. Spain, for example, had its order of sacristans in charge of the books and scriptoriums. In a certain Church in Numidia (Africa) there is even evidence of an order of gravediggers.

It should be noted, however, that in the East, except in those Churches that conformed to the Latin discipline, there were only two orders below that of diaconate: subdeacon and reader.

In Syria there was the order of psalmists but their function seems to coincide with that of the reader. In fact, even today in the Byzantine rite, the order of psalmist is conferred along with that of reader.

From this short historical survey, one point is clear: throughout the centuries the Church has abolished, changed and increased the officially recognized ministries within the community according to the needs of the particular times.

It is in view of historical considerations as well as present needs that the Church has seen fit to alter the practice concerning minor orders.

1. The orders of exorcist and doorkeeper are no longer actual ministries operative in the community today and, thus, according to the *principium veritatis* (principle of truth), are to be discontinued.
2. The lay ministries of acolyte and reader are to continue but their function is broadened and clarified.
3. The use of the term ordination is limited to those ordination rites in which there is a distinct laying on of hands: diaconate, priesthood, and episcopacy—and only those so ordained are considered clerics.
4. The term “ministry” is to be used in place of “order.” The title is in terms of function rather than ecclesial position.
5. The rites for the bestowal of the restored ministries of acolyte and reader are revised. They are not ordination rites but rites of institution—also called investiture or installation.

6. The ministries are no longer seen in terms of steps toward priestly ordination but in terms of service (ministry) within the Church community.

Thus, on August 15, 1972, Pope Paul VI issued the two apostolic letters *motu proprio*, effective January 1, 1973, concerning orders and ministries in the Church.

The first of these, *Ministeria quaedam*, suppressed tonsure and minor orders in the Latin Church, so that only ordained deacons, priests, and bishops will be considered as constituting the "clergy." Two ministries, of readers and of acolytes, have been established—for laymen who may or may not be candidates for orders.

The other apostolic letter, *Ad pascendum*, dealt with a new rite in which candidates for the diaconate (other than married men) are to make public commitment to celibacy. It also provided for a rite for admission to candidacy for orders.

Several questions arise in the selection of men to be instituted as readers and acolytes. Who? How many? On what basis?

The letter, *Ministeria quaedam* addresses itself to these practical questions only in a general way. Furthermore, it tends to overlook the fact that thousands upon thousands of laymen are now functioning in the capacity of reader and to a less extent as acolytes.

Simply to institute all these persons in the ministries would be an abuse. Rather, from the midst of the "uninstituted" ministers, there will emerge individuals of outstanding quality—outstanding in the cultic ministry as well as exemplary in the whole of Christian life.

Since the individual emerges from the midst of the community, the community in turn will be aware of his special qualifications and recognize or designate him for official institution. This, perhaps, might be one of the functions of the parish council—as the representative body of the local community.

This slow process of "emergence" will answer the question of "how many" should be instituted in the ministries.



Special qualifications will vary with each ministry. In general one would expect to find a spirit of ministerial dedication and fidelity, the capacity to function well in the ministry (with an obvious style and presence), as well as the presupposed qualities of an outstanding Christian layman.

At the present time “in accordance with the venerable tradition of the Church, installation in the ministries of reader and acolyte is reserved to men” (no. VII). This is taken as gratuitous and defensive discrimination against women, and of course it does create a contradiction since the Congregation of the Sacraments does demand a ritual deputation of a woman who is to serve as a special minister of holy communion. In fact, women at the present time properly fulfill some of the ministerial functions of the reader and acolyte but are not to be officially instituted in these ministries.

Are there any further requirements in preparation for institution once the candidates for reader and acolyte have been selected?

Unlike the previous minor orders there are no required canonical examinations, no prescribed spiritual retreat, no testimonial letters. The candidate should, however, present a petition to the Ordinary requesting to be instituted as a lay minister. Other than the absence of the positive requirements mentioned in the Apostolic Letter, there are no canonical impediments or irregularities for the lay ministries.

*Ministeria quaedam* leaves the establishment of the suitable age and specific qualities to the episcopal conference. The American episcopal conference in November 1973 decided on the following:

“1. No one should be instituted in the ministries of reader or acolyte without a period of thorough preparation in all the aspects of the respective ministry, as determined in nos. V and VI of the Apostolic Letter *Ministeria quaedam*. This period, as well as the program of formation, shall be determined by the ordinary; it should generally be from three to six months in length, in order to ascertain and develop the specific requirements of the respective ministry and the necessary leadership qualities.

“2. The minimum age for institution in the ministries of reader or acolyte shall be eighteen; the ordinary may dispense from this norm in individual cases. (This age should be an assurance of sufficient maturity; in the case of those who may later be candidates for orders or those in pre-theological studies, it will be the occasion for a prior ministry.)

“3. No one instituted as a reader may be instituted as an acolyte and no one instituted as an acolyte may be instituted as a reader until he has actually exercised the first ministry for a period of at least six months; the ordinary may dispense from this norm in particular cases, but only if this can be done without detriment to the distinction of the two ministries and the authenticity of their exercise.”

After the institution of lay ministers has been celebrated, a formal certificate should be issued to the individual as a record and a register should be kept with the names of instituted readers and acolytes and the place, date, and minister of institution (see canon 1010).

The period of pre-institution formation referred to in the Instruction is to be determined by the ordinary. If the full six-month period is utilized, approximately twenty-four study sessions could be scheduled, one meeting per week. The purpose of this period is to prepare the person for the ministry by the imparting of knowledge as well as the development of practical skills intended to foster the self-identity and confidence needed to function effectively as an instituted reader or acolyte.

The specific program established within a diocese will be designed according to available sources as well as the number preparing for institution. One central diocesan program might prove adequate for one area, whereas inter-parochial programs might be needed in another.

The following is offered as a *possible* schema for a rather extensive formation period for readers and acolytes. The ten introductory sessions are rather generic yet fundamental to a clear understanding of ministry--especially cultic ministry. Ordinarily the person who is instituted in one of the ministries should not be a candidate for another (except in the case of candidates for orders, not considered here). If this should ever

occur, one who has attended the ten introductory sessions (for example, in preparation for institution as a reader) need not repeat them during his formation prior to institution as an acolyte.

After the tenth class, those preparing for institution as readers are separated from the acolytes-to-be. A two track system thus emerges. The readers receive additional preparation in the area of sacred scripture; the acolytes in that of the eucharist. The final period of the program is the “practicum”, the do-it-yourself practice—criticism sessions. If necessary, the period may be extended as it is extremely important.

With the first separate class for readers, each might be presented with a copy of the lectionary, possibly a small, study edition now available. At each class, a period (beginning or end) should be set aside for scripture reading and reflection. Thus, from the first session, the persons are challenged to read publicly. During the course of the meetings some may find themselves unable to function effectively; others might have to be told that they are and will be unable to do so—even after individual tutoring. This is part of the built-in selectivity of the training program.

The acolytes-to-be receive further instruction concerning the eucharist and in particular those aspects that touch upon their liturgical ministry. The “practicum” should clarify their precise role as well as instill self-confidence and presence.

#### A. Introductory Sessions

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|--|--|
| 1. General Orientation                     | Use of <i>Study Text 3</i>   |
| 2. Church and Baptism:<br>calls to service | The place of ministries in<br>the ecclesial community                  |
| 3. Ministries in the<br>Community          | Scriptural, theological, his-<br>torical considerations of<br>ministry |
| 4. Liturgical Ministries                   | History, types, theology   |
| 5. Liturgy in the Church                   | Definition, theology, history  |
| 6. Liturgy and Vatican II                  | Principles of reform and<br>renewal                                    |

3

SUGGESTED TRAINING  
PROGRAM FOR READERS  
AND ACOLYTES

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 7. Theology of the Eucharist | Theology, structure                              |
| 8. Liturgy of the Word       | Theology, role of the sacramentary, lectionary   |
| 9. Liturgy of the Eucharist  | Content and structure of the Eucharistic Prayers |
| 10. Concluding Session       | Specific questions, areas of concern             |

B. The Training of Readers

11. General Introduction to the Bible
12. Old Testament
13. Old Testament
14. Old Testament
15. Introduction to the Gospels
16. Gospels
17. Gospels
18. Introduction to the Epistles
19. Epistles
- 20-24.

Practicum in the Theory and Art of Public Reading, Liturgical Reading, Use of Video Tape, Criticism of Performance.

25. Study of the Rite of Institution of Readers.

C. The Training of Acolytes

11. The Historical Development of the Eucharist
12. The Constitution on the Liturgy, Chapter II: The Eucharist
13. The Eucharist as Sacrament and Sacrifice
14. Study of the Four Eucharistic Prayers in the Roman Rite

- 15. Communion under Both Kinds
- 16. Communion to the Sick (Study Text 1)

17-24.

A study and practice of the rites for distribution of communion within and outside of the Mass, the rite of exposition, the preparation of the altar and vessels, the style and presence of the acolyte.

- 25. Study of the Rite of Institution of Acolytes

The liturgical institution will ordinarily be celebrated by the bishop in whose diocese the individual will (first) exercise the ministry. Priests may not be delegated to celebrate these rites.

The place of the celebration (parish church, cathedral, seminary) will depend on several factors: the availability of the bishop, the number of readers and acolytes to be instituted, etc. In any case, it is to be a public celebration according to the liturgical rites revised by the Apostolic See (see Appendix). The institution rite, celebrated within Mass or a celebration of the Word of God, follows the gospel. The new Roman Missal includes the proper for the Mass for use on this occasion: "For the Ministers of the Church." The readings are selected completely or in part from the liturgy of the day or from the suggested texts.

The simple but adequate rite of institution (See Appendix I, II) consists of:

- 1. Calling of the candidates
- 2. Homily
- 3. Prayer and blessing
- 4. Acceptance of the sign of ministry

If the number of candidates is large, it is appropriate to sing psalm 18, "Song of Triumph for the Kings," or any appropriate musical selection during the acceptance of the sign of ministry (the book of scripture for readers, bread or wine for acolytes).

4

CELEBRATION OF  
INSTITUTION



The ministries of reader and acolyte are not to be seen as steps to orders as the previous minor orders in fact were. First of all, the ministries are no longer limited to clerical candidates and secondly the basis of the call is the fitness of the candidate for that specific ministry in itself—not in view of an eventual diaconal or priestly ordination.

Nevertheless, these two ministries do remain a requirement for ordination. In the future it may not be uncommon for a young man entering the major seminary to have already been instituted as a reader and/or acolyte. When this is not the case, the seminarian should ask to be instituted in these ministries when he is prepared to exercise them. The norms for selection and preparation are the same as those listed above.

There is no hardfast set order for the reception of these ministries. The installation into the ministry of acolyte can precede that of reader.

Although the institution of reader and acolyte need not precede the seminarian's admission to candidacy for orders, it normally would. Sufficient time and spacing must be given for the opportunity to actually function as reader and acolyte. In the United States this is at least six months.

Obviously a bishop should not institute readers or acolytes for another diocese, but in the case of candidates for orders (diaconate, presbyterate) who are actually living and serving in a diocese other than their own, for example, in a seminary, it is appropriate for the bishop of the diocese where the seminary is located to institute them in the ministry.

The institution in ministries has only the juridical effect that the person (whether a layman or an eventual candidate for orders) is an instituted or recognized minister in the Church. There are no juridical effects similar to those of the clerical state and no obligation on the part of the Church authorities to support the minister or the like. The minister does, however, have the responsibilities and duties outlined in the documents and rites, to be exercised under the authority of the bishop and the local pastor or rector of the Church where the ministry is exercised.

What has been said so far concerning the two ministries applies to religious as well, with a few exceptions.

In the place of the bishop the major superior of a religious order (not a delegate) may be the celebrant at the institution rites. The letters of petition are addressed to him; record of the installations are kept on file.

Religious instituted as reader and acolyte are to serve the liturgical needs of their particular communities. To function in a given parish the permission of the local pastor or rector of the Church is required.

In the average parish situation, the need for ministries of reader and acolyte will normally be filled by the laymen of the community. The religious best fulfill these ministries within their own religious communities.

Those men preparing for the office of permanent deacons in the Church are also to be instituted as readers and acolytes early enough to allow for an interval of ministerial function. The minimum period in the United States is six months for each ministry.

The instruction does make provision for those cases where there are reasons for proceeding to ordination without delay. In such cases institution in ministries may be omitted with the permission of the Apostolic See. These will be exceptional cases.

The apostolic letter *Ministeria quaedam*, reserves institution into the ministry of reader and acolyte to men. It should be clearly understood, however, that although the liturgical rite of institution is so limited, in terms of actual ministerial function women are not necessarily excluded.

By special indult from the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, granted in 1970 at the request of the American episcopal conference, women have fulfilled the role of reader in liturgical celebrations. They have also undertaken the acolyte's function as special minister of holy communion when pastoral needs so demanded it.

The original edition of the general instruction of the Roman Missal stated that "When a qualified man is not available, the

conference of bishops may permit a woman to proclaim the readings prior to the gospel, while standing outside the sanctuary." On December 23, 1972 the Congregation for Divine Worship promulgated a list of changes in the Roman Missal. The above quotation was one. The revised text reads: "*Those who exercise the ministry of readers, even though they have not been instituted, should be qualified and carefully prepared so that the reading will develop in the faithful an appreciation of scripture. The conference of bishops may permit a qualified woman to proclaim the readings prior to the gospel and announce the intentions of the general intercessions*" (no. 66).

Nevertheless, the exclusion of women from the liturgical institution in the ministries of reader and acolyte seems unnecessary and has been judged by many women to be offensive and discriminatory. In particular, the injunction of *Gaudium et spes* (no. 29) against such distinctions has been cited, especially since liturgical institution in the two ministries does not involve the sacrament of holy orders.

This position does not touch in any direct way the discussed and controverted disciplinary or doctrinal issue of the reception of orders by women. The Apostolic See has clearly and explicitly removed the two ministries in question away from the close relationship to the sacrament of orders which they had enjoyed as minor orders.

### III

## Ministerial Functions of Acolyte and Reader

The *Constitution on the Liturgy* rightly states that “liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation” (no. 26). Or, more specifically, “in liturgical celebrations each person, minister or layman, who has an office to perform, should do all, but only, those parts which pertain to his office by nature of the rite and the principles of liturgy” (no. 28).

The revision of the minor orders and the abolition of the subdiaconate has helped to clarify the ministerial roles in the liturgical celebration below that of diaconate. The ministers (reader and acolyte) have definite functions as outlined in *Ministeria quaedam* and further clarified in the variations of the new Roman Missal (Congregation for Divine Worship, December 23, 1972, hereafter referred to as Variations).

The instituted acolyte is first of all a minister in the liturgical celebration with the specific function of assisting the deacon or priest. This entails the preparation of the altar and the sacred vessels (Variations, no. 65) before the celebration as well as during it. “After the general intercessions the offertory song begins. The ministers place the corporal, purificator, chalice, and missal on the altars” (General Instruction, no. 100). “The offerings of the people are received by the priest, assisted by the ministers” (*ibid.* no. 103). If incense is used, the minister assists the priest (in the absence of a deacon) and incenses the priest and people at the offertory.

The acolyte is by office a special minister of the Eucharist. He is to function in this capacity according to the guidelines

1  
LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS  
OF ACOLYTES



established in the instruction *Immensae Caritatis* (see Study Text 1).

After the priest (deacon) has received communion, the celebrant gives communion (under both kinds) to the acolyte and then gives him the vessel with hosts to distribute communion to the faithful following the same rite as the ordinary minister.

“The vessels are cleansed by the priest, deacon, or acolyte after communion or after Mass, if possible at the side table” (Variations, no. 238).

As a special minister of the Eucharist the acolyte is qualified to give communion outside the Mass to himself and to other members of the faithful in the absence of an ordinary minister of communion or if such a minister is impeded by age, bad health, or other duties of the pastoral ministry. Thus he may bring communion to the sick—in their homes, in hospitals and other institutions, homes for the aged, etc.

Following the above principle about the unavailability of an ordinary minister of the Eucharist, the acolyte is also permitted to expose the Blessed Sacrament (without bestowing the blessing) when necessary.

In addition to the above mentioned functions, the acolyte should be called upon to instruct others who assist in the liturgical celebration.

2  
LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS  
OF READERS

The primary function of the instituted reader is to read the Word of God in the liturgical assembly. In this capacity he fulfills many of the functions of the suppressed order of sub-deacon (see Variations).

The reader may carry the lectionary in the entrance procession and read the lesson(s) before the gospel, for reading the scriptures is traditionally considered a ministerial, not a presidential function. (For the same reason it is desirable that the gospel be read by the deacon or in his absence by a priest other than the celebrant. Only in the absence of a deacon or another priest, should the celebrant read the gospel text [see General Instruction, no. 34].) The reader has his own proper function in the eucharistic celebration and should be called upon to exercise this even though ministers of a higher rank are present.



When there is no psalmist present the reader recites the responsorial psalm and in the absence of a deacon or cantor makes the intentions of the general intercessions. In the case where there is no leader of song the reader may also fulfill this function.

Lest the reader become a ministerial factotum it is ideal to employ other ministers (cantor, psalmist, leader of music) and limit the reader's functions to those which are specifically his and for which he is properly prepared.

It is appropriate for ordinaries, "for a reasonable cause and in particular cases," to permit readers to exercise a ministry of preaching. This is by analogy with canon no. 1342, §1, which refers to tonsured clerics and those in minor orders, now replaced by the ministries. Such a permission should be given only in view of the capacity of the individuals and circumstances; it should not be done to the prejudice of the ministry of the word exercised by those in orders (deacon, priest, bishop).

The reader, as a permanent minister, can help in preparing other temporary readers as they are needed in the celebration of the liturgy.

Finally, the reader can assist in preparing the faithful for the worthy reception of the sacraments. This task, in the United States at least, has been attended to by the catechists, teachers of religious education, and others with formal training and preparation. The catechist performs a ministry that in the future may also be given formal recognition as an official ministry within the Christian community.



## IV

# The Rite of Admission to Candidacy

With the suppression of the rite of tonsure, the entrance into the clerical state has been joined to the diaconate. Prior to the reception of the diaconate, however, a new rite has been introduced by which the aspirant to the diaconate publicly manifests his desire to eventually ask to enter into holy orders. The celebration of the rite marks the individual among the official candidates for the diaconate or priesthood.

The apostolic letter *Ad pascendum* which introduced the new rite does not require the presentation of formal testimonial letters prior to admission to candidacy but does indicate that suitable means should be taken to make certain that the candidates “give signs of an authentic vocation and, endowed with good qualities and free from mental and physical defects, wish to dedicate their lives to the service of the Church for the glory of God and the good of souls” (no. 16).

In this statement we find the positive requirements for admission to candidacy for orders. Although there are no canonical impediments to candidacy, existence of an impediment or irregularity for orders should be taken into account with a view to dispensation prior to ordination.

Seminarians aspiring to the transitional diaconate (who will go on to the priesthood) must be at least twenty years old and have begun their theological program of studies before the rite of admission. For a just cause the ordinary may dispense from this age requirement.

No bishop may accept a candidate for another diocese; he should not celebrate the rite of admission without a letter from the bishop who has accepted the candidate. There is nothing to prevent one ordinary from entrusting the liturgical rite to another if he is incapacitated or otherwise unable to receive his own

1  
REQUIREMENTS FOR  
ADMISSION TO  
CANDIDACY

candidates. Although there is no mention of dimissorial letters in the apostolic letter, there must be some record that the admission to candidacy by a bishop other than the proper bishop is done lawfully. Priests may not be delegated to take the place of the ordinary (the bishop and, in clerical institutes of perfection, the major superior) for the rite of admission to candidacy.

2  
SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE  
OF RITE

The Congregation for Divine Worship wishes to stress the spiritual significance of the rite of admission as it is considered the occasion when the candidate makes his initial public expression of intention to eventually ask for ordination. At the same time, it is the occasion for the community to pray for him in view of this resolution. For the individual it marks a definite period of preparation for a specific ministry in the ecclesial community.

The minimum, by way of requirement, is a maturity of purpose and way of life. That the individual has reached the point in his life where he can sincerely state his intention to dedicate himself to the service of God and man by eventually accepting the responsibilities of the diaconate and/or priesthood, is a prudential judgment to be made first of all by the candidate himself and secondly by those directly involved and in charge of his formation. More is involved than merely chronological maturity.

The candidate's proper ordinary is determined as for other lay people. The admission to candidacy, establishes a new spiritual bond between the ordinary and candidate as well as the local Church in which the candidate will serve.

Candidacy for orders has none of the juridical effects of tonsure. The person does not become a cleric, he is not incardinated, nor is there any strict contractual relationship of a canonical nature between the ordinary and the candidate.

3  
RELIGIOUS

The apostolic letter clearly states that "professed members of clerical congregations who seek the priesthood (or diaconate) are not bound to this rite" (1a).

It is evidently an oversight that the religious need not celebrate this rite of admission which is quite distinct from the com-

mitment publicly made at the time of religious profession. For this reason it is preferable that religious also celebrate this rite.

In clerical institutes the major superior is competent for this acceptance in the place of the bishop (*see* no. 3).

The bishop (or major superior for religious) is the celebrant for the rite of admission. By its very nature it presupposes a *public* celebration within the Mass or an appropriate liturgy of the word. The rite can be celebrated on any day although feast days would be the more fitting. The rite of admission should never be celebrated at the same time an ordination or institution of ministers takes place. The readings, taken from the liturgy of the day—totally or in part—should be selected in accordance with the occasion. The new rite proposes alternate scriptural texts.

After the gospel reading the homily given by the bishop develops the scripture passages in relation to the mystery of vocation—God’s call as well as man’s response in faith.

Each candidate is then called by name to stand before the bishop and community. The celebrant proceeds to question the individual as to his intention concerning his ministry in the Church and his seriousness of intent to prepare fittingly for it. The short concluding prayer for the candidates is followed by a brief litany in which the patron saints of the candidates should be included.

4

CELEBRATION OF RITE





## V

# Permanent and Transitional Diaconate

Sacred Scripture and early Christian writers offer ample material for reflection on the qualities, importance and office of diaconate. The apostolic letter, *Ad pascendum*, cites examples from both sources.

No longer exclusively a step to the priesthood, the diaconate has been reinstated as a distinct and permanent rank within the hierarchy. In fact, it is with the reception of the order of diaconate that a layman becomes a cleric, incardinated into a specific diocese. As a means of practical preparation for the ministry of deacon, the ministries of reader and acolyte are to be exercised before ordination. Dispensation from these ministries is reserved to the Holy See. The rite of admission to candidacy is also to be celebrated (above).

In addition to the installation of the ministries of reader and acolyte and the rite of admission to candidacy, the candidate must declare in writing to his ordinary (bishop or major religious superior) his desire to be ordained a deacon—a request that is made in total freedom of choice and full awareness of all that is entailed in that selection.

Prior to ordination, furthermore, the oath of service is to be taken in accord with canon no. 981, § 1, in which the diocesan candidate promises to devote his entire life to the service of the diocese under the authority of the ordinary of the place at the time. Religious with solemn profession or simple perpetual vows do not make this oath as their service is directed by the community in terms of its particular constitutions.

Up to the recent reform of orders those ordained to the subdiaconate took upon themselves the responsibility of celibacy and the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. With the sup-

### 1 REQUIREMENTS

### 2 CELIBACY AND LITURGY OF THE HOURS

pression of ordination to subdiaconate, these responsibilities are now placed upon the deacon.

More specifically, a public commitment to celibacy is made before the ordination of deacons by all candidates to the priesthood and unmarried candidates to the permanent diaconate. In spite of their religious vow, religious are also called upon to make the commitment to celibacy even though it can only appear redundant.

The rite, inserted in the diaconate ordination rite, follows immediately upon the homily. After a brief address the bishop asks the candidates: "Are you willing before the Lord and the Church as a sign of your interior dedication to Christ to observe celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom in continual service to God and man?"

Once the candidates have publicly expressed their consent the candidates to the permanent diaconate, not required to follow the celibate life in view of their marital state, come before the bishop to receive the order of diaconate which continues with the examination of the candidates concerning their intention, willingness to accept the duties of the office, and desire to remain firm in the faith. At this point, after the third question, a new demand has been added to the rite of ordination. The celebrant asks all the candidates: "Are you resolved to enrich and safeguard a spirit of prayer appropriate to your way of life, and in this spirit, according to your state of life, to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours for the Church and the entire world?"

The apostolic letter reiterates the norms found in the General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours (*see nos. 29-30*).

"29. Bishops and priests, as well as other sacred ministers, who have accepted the obligation of celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours from the Church (*see no. 17*) observe the entire Office each day, and at the proper times whenever possible.

"They place the greatest importance to those Hours which are the hinges on which the daily Office turns, namely Lauds and Vespers; they should be careful not to omit these Hours without a serious reason.

“They pray the Office of Readings, which is essentially a liturgical celebration of the Word of God; in this way they daily fulfill their duty of receiving God’s Word in order to become perfect disciples of the Lord and win a deeper understanding of the unfathomable riches of Christ.

“To make the entire day holy, they will treasure the recitation of the Middle Hours and Compline, by which they complete the ‘Work of God’ and commend themselves to God before retiring.

“30. It is most appropriate for permanent deacons to recite at least part of the Liturgy of the Hours each day, as determined by the Conference of Bishops.”

Pope Paul’s instruction *Ad pascendum* clarified the statement found in paragraph number 29 of the General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours where “sacred ministers” are mentioned along with bishops and priests as among those who are to observe the entire office daily. According to the accepted terminology, deacons are included in the term “sacred ministers.” The apostolic letter, however, further delineates between deacons called to the priesthood and the permanent deacons. For the latter it is most fitting “to recite daily at least a part of the Liturgy of the Hours, as determined by the Conference of Bishops” (no. VIII, b).

The United States Bishops’ Committee on Permanent Diaconate recommends to all permanent deacons: (1) that the hour of vespers (or, at times, lauds) might be prayed in common with others—either the deacon’s family or some community of people with whom he is working pastorally; (2) that the structures and expression of the deacon’s prayer life be kept flexible, so that they bind more closely to his wife and children rather than separate from them; (3) that his personal, private prayer make use of the office of readings, so that consistent reading of the bible will develop as a part of his prayer life.





## VI

### Ministries for the Future

The apostolic letter *Ministeria quaedam* of August 15, 1972, left to the episcopal conferences the possible development and recognition of lay ministries in addition to those of readers and acolytes. It is understood that there are many ministries in the Church among those who are not ordained, and the choice of certain ministries for recognition within the church community is intended only to acknowledge their special significance, breadth of exercise, stability, and the like.

From some points of view, it would be premature to specify additional lay ministries when it is not even certain how much meaning and effectiveness will be attached to the institution of liturgical readers and acolytes. It must be confessed that there are two rather opposed tendencies in this matter: one position is that lay ministries, which are a participation in the Church's mission to which all without exception are called, should be encouraged by avoiding any special system or class or caste of designated lay ministers—and indeed that contemporary mentality prefers the act of deeper involvement and commitment to the external sign of church recognition or acceptance; the other position holds that the Church should sanction and commission and bless at least those members who take *leading* and *stable* roles in specially definable ministries, above all that the Church should unite in explicit prayer and intercession for the leading members of the Christian community.

All Christian believers are called to service and ministry. We have seen that the Church singles out those ministries of special value and distinction for prayer, blessing, and institution. The ministers of acolyte and reader are current examples.

Because the two ministries now approved for the Latin Church are directly and almost exclusively for liturgical services, there is some danger that “ministry” will be too narrowly con-

strued. Perhaps in the near future one or the other ministry of a non-liturgical character should be recognized. Since it is the present practice of only instituting men into the ministries of reader and acolyte, the designation of additional ministries open to women would lessen the discrimination that some presently feel.

What are possible ministries for the future? For the sake of example, two might be considered here: catechist or teacher of religion and minister of music.

1  
CATECHIST OR TEACHER  
OF RELIGION

This ministry, widely exercised, has increased significance in the Church in the United States as more and more attention is paid to the catechesis of adults, younger people, and children no longer under general instruction by members of religious institutes. What is meant here is not a casual or occasional teacher of religion, but a fully prepared and in some sense professional catechist.

The General Catechetical Directory defines this minister: "in a certain way the interpreter of the Church among those who are to be instructed. He reads the signs of faith and he teaches others how to read them" (no. 35). The conciliar decree *Christus Dominus* had already spoken of the needed qualifications: catechists should be "properly trained for their task, so that they will be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church and will have both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of pedagogical methods" (no. 14).

Already it is not uncommon for teachers of religion to be commissioned in a service of public prayer. This is an indication of the desire that there be a kind of formal acknowledgment of this role and ministry, with related liturgical institution or investiture to indicate the stability of the commitment of the ministry and the Church's intercession for the ministers. This development has been strongly espoused by the Commission for Catechists of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and in other ways, as summarized in the article in a recent issue of *Living Light* by Sister Mary Charles Bryce, "The Status and Installation of Catechists."

It is possible that some question may arise concerning terminology, since in the past "catechist" has often been given a special application in mission countries which it does not have in the United States. With the increased understanding of the professional responsibility and qualification of teachers of religion in the catechetical mission of the Church, the use of "catechist" need be no obstacle. As an alternative the expression, "teacher of religion," may be used; it may be more easily applied to those teachers at higher level, such as lay teachers of theology, should there be any desire to extend this ministry to them. A more formal designation is also possible, such as "minister of religious education."

The ministry of catechist or teacher of religion could be understood as referring to:

- (a) properly prepared and qualified teachers of religion;
- (b) those who exercise a supervisory capacity in religious education;
- (c) directors and coordinators of religious education.

This is a liturgical ministry, like that of readers and acolytes. It can be conceived broadly to include a number of functions in worship which are sufficiently distinct to deserve formal recognition:

- (a) the "psalmist," namely, the cantor who leads the psalm between the first two readings, as distinct from the reader or lector;
- (b) the cantor who leads the liturgical assembly in processional psalms and responsorial song of other kinds;
- (c) the leader of song and hymns by the congregation;
- (d) the choir leader or director of music;
- (e) the organist.

As is evident, these roles are sometimes exercised by a single person, sometimes by distinct and highly qualified persons. As a special lay ministry, this is conceived as applicable both to the smaller parish or community where an individual is responsible for an entire program of music and to the larger

2

MINISTER OF  
CHURCH MUSIC

circumstances in which it might be appropriate to have a choir director, organist, and (chief) cantor all instituted as ministers of music.

This ministry, already widely and generously exercised, enhances the place of music in the liturgical celebration. It brings about a better distribution of roles by distinguishing the minister of music, cantor, leader of song, etc., from the reader and acolyte.

New ministries cannot be recognized indiscriminately nor will their liturgical institution be for all Catholics engaged in the specific ministerial work. It remains the responsibility for each episcopal conference to develop and recognize additional lay ministries. The formal institution should be reserved for those who will exercise the ministry on a very stable or permanent basis, who had an appropriate period of preparation and probation, and who will exercise some special leadership function in relation to others who perform such services in the Christian community.

## APPENDIX I

### The Institution of Readers

1. Readers are instituted by the bishop or the major superior of a clerical religious institute. The rite takes place during Mass or a celebration of the word of God.
2. The readings are taken in whole or in part from the liturgy of the day or from the texts suggested below.

#### INTRODUCTION

3. After the gospel, the bishop sits with his mitre on, and the appointed deacon or priest calls the candidates:

#### CALLING OF THE CANDIDATES

Let those who are to be instituted in the ministry of readers come forward.

The candidates are called by name, and each one answers:

Present.

They go to the bishop, before whom they make a reverence.

4. Then all sit and the bishop gives the homily, which he concludes by speaking to the candidates in these or similar words:

#### INSTRUCTION

God our Father revealed the mystery of salvation to us and brought it to completion through his Son made man, Jesus Christ. After proclaiming all that the Father had done, Christ entrusted his Church with the task of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

As readers of the word of God, you are to help with this task. You are accepting an important office within the people of God and are specially commissioned to serve the faith, which is grounded in the word of God.

It will be your responsibility to proclaim that word in the liturgical assembly, to instruct children and adults in the faith and prepare them for worthy reception of the sacrament, and to announce the Gospel, the good news of Christ, to those who do not already know it. Thus with your help



men and women will come to know God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ, whom he sent, and so will be able to reach eternal life.

When you proclaim God's word to others, see that you are ready to accept it yourselves in obedience to the Holy Spirit. Meditate on God's word often, so that you will daily grow in God's love and by your way of life show forth to the world our Savior Jesus Christ.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

5. Then all stand, and the bishop, without his mitre, invites the faithful to pray:

Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray that God our Father  
will bless these his servants  
who are chosen for the ministry of readers,  
so that carefully performing the task entrusted to them  
they may preach Jesus Christ,  
and give glory to our Father in heaven.

All pray in silence for a brief period:

PRAYER

6. Then the bishop continues:

God,  
source of all goodness and light,  
you sent your only Son, the Word of life,  
to make known the mystery of your love.  
In your kindness bless + our brothers  
who have been chosen for the ministry of readers.  
As they meditate on your word,  
help them to understand it better  
and to proclaim it faithfully to your people.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

INSTITUTION

7. Each candidate goes to the bishop, who gives him the Bible, saying:

Receive this book of holy scripture  
and announce the word of God faithfully  
so that it may grow in the hearts of men.

The reader answers:

Amen.

Meanwhile, psalm 19[18] or another appropriate song  
may be sung, especially if there are many candidates.

8. If the institution of readers takes place during Mass, the  
Mass continues as usual. If the institution takes place during a  
celebration of the word, the bishop blesses the assembly and  
dismisses it in the usual manner.

## APPENDIX II

### Institution of Acolytes

1. Acolytes are instituted by the bishop or the major superior of a clerical religious institute. The rite takes place during Mass.
2. The readings are taken in whole or in part from the liturgy of the day or from the texts suggested below.

#### CALLING OF THE CANDIDATES

3. After the gospel, the bishop sits with his mitre on, and the appointed deacon or priest calls the candidates:

Let those who are to be instituted in the ministry of acolytes come forward.

The candidates are called by name, and each one answers:

Present.

They go to the bishop, before whom they make a reverence.

#### INSTRUCTION

4. Then all sit, and the bishop gives the homily, which he concludes by speaking to the candidates in these or similar words:

Now that you have been chosen for the ministry of acolytes, you are to have a special part in the Church's ministry. The eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the Church, for it builds up the people of God. It is your responsibility to assist the priests and deacons at the eucharist and, as an auxiliary minister, to give holy communion to the faithful at the liturgy and to the sick.

Because you are called to this ministry, you should share more deeply in the Lord's sacrifice and let it shape your lives. Make every effort to appreciate the spiritual meaning of what you do so that each day you may offer yourselves to God as spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to him through Jesus Christ.

Remember that, as you share the one bread with your brothers and sisters, you become one body with them. Have

a genuine love for the mystical body of Christ, the people of God, especially for its weak and sick members. Pattern your lives on the commandment the Lord gave his apostles at the Last Supper: "Love one another, as I have loved you."

5. Then all stand, and the bishop without his mitre, invites the faithful to pray:

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray that the Lord will bless those  
whom he has chosen for the ministry of acolytes  
and that he will give them the strength  
to be faithful ministers in his Church.

All pray in silence for a brief period.

6. Then the bishop continues:

PRAYER

God of mercy and love,  
through Christ your only Son  
you have entrusted the bread of life to your Church.  
Kindly bless + our brothers,  
chosen for the ministry of acolytes.  
As faithful ministers at your altar,  
they will give the bread of life to others.  
May they grow in faith and love  
in building up your Church.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

7. Each candidate goes to the bishop, who gives him a vessel with bread or wine to be consecrated, saying:

INSTITUTION

Receive this vessel with bread (wine)  
for the celebration of the eucharist.  
Live in such a way  
that you may serve faithfully  
at the Lord's table  
and in the mission of his Church.

The acolyte answers:

Amen.

8. At the presentation of the gifts, the acolytes (or some of them, if the number is large) present the patens with the bread and the chalice with the wine.
9. The acolytes receive communion immediately after the deacons.
10. In the Mass of institution the bishop may direct the acolyte, as an auxiliary minister, to help in giving communion to the faithful.



## APPENDIX III

### Admission to Candidacy for the Diaconate and Presbyterate

1. The rite of admission to candidacy for the diaconate and presbyterate is celebrated when the candidates have reached a maturity of purpose and are shown to have the necessary qualifications. Those professed in clerical religious institutes are not bound to the celebration of this rite.
2. The intention of receiving orders is to be expressed publicly by the candidates. The bishop or the major superior of a clerical religious institute accepts their intention publicly.
3. The rite of admission may be celebrated on any day, especially on feast days, in a church or another appropriate place, either during Mass or during a celebration of the word of God. Because of its nature, the rite is never joined to an ordination or the institution of readers or acolytes.
4. The readings are taken in whole or in part from the liturgy of the day or from the texts suggested below.
5. After the gospel, the bishop, sits with his mitre on and gives the homily which he concludes with these or similar words:

#### INSTRUCTION

Today, in the presence of the Church, our brothers are recommended to you and to us for admission among the candidates for holy orders.

Christ instructed us: "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his field." These candidates know the Lord's concern for his flock, they have reflected on the needs of the Church, and they feel ready to respond generously to the Lord in the words of the prophet: "Here I am, send me forth." They have hope in the Lord, that they may answer his call faithfully.

This call from the Lord must be discerned and understood in the daily signs that reveal God's will to the prudent.

God's grace moves and helps the ones he chooses to share in the ordained priesthood of Christ. At the same time God permits us to call these qualified candidates and to ordain them, with the unique seal of the Holy Spirit, for the ministry of the Lord and of his Church. In the sacrament of orders they will be entrusted with carrying out the saving office of Christ, which he fulfilled on earth. When their time for ordination comes, they will be associated with our ministry: to serve the Church and to build up, by word and sacrament, the Christian communities to which they will be sent.

Our brothers have already begun their formation so that later they may be called to ordination by their bishop. Day by day they learn how to live by the Gospel, and to be formed in faith, hope, and charity. They seek to grow in the spirit of prayer and to imitate Christ's zeal for all men.

Now, moved by the love of Christ and the working of the Spirit, they have come to this moment when they are to manifest publicly their desire to bind themselves to the service of God and man.

When each one is called by name, he should come forward and declare his intention before the Church assembled here.

CALLING OF THE  
CANDIDATES

6. The appointed deacon or priest calls the candidates by name.

Each one answers:

Present.

They go to the bishop, before whom they make a reverence.

EXAMINATION

7. Then the bishop speaks to the candidates in these words or in others which the episcopal conference may determine:

My sons, the pastors and teachers entrusted with your formation and others who know you have given you a favorable recommendation. We rely completely on their judgment.

In response to the Lord's call, are you resolved to complete your preparation so that in due time you will be ready to be ordained for the ministry of the Church?

Together the candidates answer:

I am.

The bishop:

Are you resolved to prepare yourself so that you may faithfully serve Christ and the Church which is his body?

The candidates:

I am.

If desired, the episcopal conference may determine the manner in which the bishop is to accept the candidates.

The bishop adds:

The Church joyfully accepts your statement of purpose. May God who began the good work in you bring it to completion.

All:

Amen.

#### ACCEPTANCE OF THE CANDIDATES

8. Then all stand, and the bishop, without his mitre, invites the faithful to pray:

Brothers and sisters,  
let us pray to our Lord God  
that he may pour his grace and blessing upon his servants  
who desire to serve him in the ministry of the Church.

#### INVITATION TO PRAYER

9. The deacon or another qualified minister proposes the following intentions or others adapted to the circumstances. All respond with an appropriate acclamation.

#### INTERCESSIONS

That our brothers may grow in union with Christ  
and bear witness to him in the world:  
We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may help carry the burden of their fellow men  
and always listen to the voice of the Spirit:  
We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

That they may become ministers of the Church  
and their word and example  
will help their brothers and sisters grow strong in the faith  
and lead them to the celebration of the eucharist:  
We pray to the Lord.

R. Lord, hear our prayer.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

10. The bishop continues:

A Hear our prayers, Lord,  
and in your kindness bless + these your sons  
who wish to give themselves to your service  
through ministry to your people.  
May they be faithful to your call,  
follow Christ the priest in truth and love,  
and carry out the apostolic mission of your Church.  
Grant this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Or:

B Lord, help your servants,  
to understand and live the mystery of your love  
day by day.  
Assist them as they prepare  
to become ministers to your people.  
Fill them with the spirit of your love  
so that, for your glory and honor,  
they may help their brothers and  
sisters on the way to salvation.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

11. If the rite of admission takes place during Mass, the celebration continues as usual. If it takes place during a celebration of the word, the bishop blesses the assembly and dismisses it in the usual way.

## APPENDIX IV

### Ritual Mass for the Ministers of the Church

The new Roman Missal includes a ritual Mass for the ministers of the Church. The English translation proposed by the International Committee on English in the Liturgy is presented here for the purpose of study.

All the presidential prayers, addressed to the Father, include the ministerial theme of the celebration. The opening oration draws inspiration from the text of Mark 10:43-45: “. . . anyone who wants to become great among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (see Mt 20:24-28; Lk 22:24-27). Another lesson in the leadership of service inspired the Prayer Over the Gifts: “If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you” (John 13:14-15). The Prayer After Communion, adverting to the sacrament participated in, petitions for the grace that the ministers might be found faithful in their ministry of the gospel, sacrament, and charity: (“ut . . . fideles inveniantur Evangelii, sacramentorum caritatisque ministri”) for the glory of God as well as the well being of the faithful whom they serve.

All three prayers follow the Roman or so-called classical structure: (1) the invocation to God the Father, (2) the petition on behalf of the faithful, and (3) the scope or reason for the request. The conclusions for the Prayer Over the Gifts and Prayer After Communion are the usual short form and clearly indicate the mediatorship of Christ emphasized since apostolic times. In the letter to the Hebrews, for example, we read that “it is through Him, then, that we must offer to God a continual sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips that give thanks to his name” (Heb 13:15).

1

PRESIDENTIAL PRAYERS



### *OPENING PRAYER*

Father,  
you have taught the ministers of your Church  
not to desire that they be served but to serve their  
brothers and sisters.

May they be effective in their work,  
and persevering in their prayer,  
performing their ministry with gentleness and concern  
for others.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

### *PRAYER OVER THE GIFTS*

Father,  
your Son washed the feet of his disciples  
as an example for us.  
Accept our gifts and our worship;  
by offering ourselves as a spiritual sacrifice  
may we be filled with the spirit of humility and love.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

### *PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION*

Lord,  
you renew your servants with food and drink from heaven.  
Keep them faithful as ministers of word and sacrament,  
working for your glory  
and for the salvation of those who believe in you.  
Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.

### 2 SCRIPTURE READING

The following scriptural readings are suggested for the respective rites, whether celebrated within Mass or outside Mass. For convenience, a reference to the *Lectionary for Mass* is given in parenthesis when applicable.

These scriptural texts offer those preparing for the liturgy a wide range of options from which to select the most fitting in view of the pastoral situation. Those to be instituted as readers or acolytes as well as those seeking candidacy to orders should be encouraged to use the texts for the basis of personal prayer,

reflection as well as group study and discussion prior to the celebration or subsequent to it.

#### Readings from the Old Testament

—FOR THE INSTITUTION  
OF READERS

1. Deuteronomy 6:3-9 Keep these words in your heart. (no. 748)
2. Deuteronomy 30:10-14 Let the instruction of the Lord be near you. (no. 106)
3. Isaiah 55:10-11 The rain makes the earth fruitful.
4. Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10 They read from the book of Law and they understood what was read. (no. 458)

#### Readings from the New Testament

5. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 I have told you of the mystery of God.
6. 2 Timothy 3:14-17 All scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for teaching. (no. 357)
7. 2 Timothy 4:1-5 Preach the Good News; fulfill your ministry. (no. 358)
8. Hebrews 4:12-13 The word of God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (no. 144)
9. 1 John 1:1-4 What we have seen and heard we are making known to you. (no. 697)

#### Responsorial Psalms

10. Psalm 18:8, 9, 10, 11.  
R. (cf. John 6:64b) Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.
11. Psalm 118:9, 10, 11, 12.  
R. (12b) Lord, teach me your decrees.
12. Psalm 147:15-16, 17-18, 19-20.  
R. (12) Praise the Lord, Jerusalem.

#### Alleluia Verse and Verse before the Gospel

13. John 6:64b and 69b Your words, Lord, are spirit and life:  
you have the words of eternal life.

14. Cf. Acts 16:14b Open our hearts, O Lord,  
to listen to the words of your Son.
15. The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower;  
all who come to him will live for ever.
16. Cf. Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.

### Gospel

17. Matthew 5:14-19 You are the light of the world. (no. 74)
18. Mark 1:35-39 He came preaching in their synagogues (no. 75)
19. Luke 4:16-21 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. (no. 39)
20. Luke 24:44-48 Jesus sent the apostles to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (no. 59)
21. John 7:14-18 My teaching is not mine, but of him who sent me.

—FOR THE INSTITUTION  
OF ACOLYTES

### Readings from the Old Testament

1. Genesis 14:18-20 Melchisedech offered bread and wine to God. (no. 170)
2. Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15 I will rain bread from heaven upon you. (no. 397)
3. Exodus 24:3-8 This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you. (no. 169)
4. Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a He gave you food which you and your fathers did not know. (no. 168)
5. 1 Kings 19:4-8 Strengthened by the food, he walked to the mountain of the Lord.
6. Proverbs 9:1-6 Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared. (no. 120)

### Readings from the New Testament

7. Acts 2:42-47 They remained faithful in prayer and the breaking of bread. (no. 44)
8. Acts 10:34a, 37-43 We have eaten and drunk with him after his resurrection from the dead. (no. 43)
9. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 Though we are many, we form a single body because we share this one loaf. (no. 168)
10. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Until the Lord comes, every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim his death. (no. 40)
11. Hebrew 9:11-15 The blood of Christ will purify our inner selves. (no. 169)

### Responsorial Psalms

12. Psalm 22:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6.  
R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
13. Psalm 33:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11.  
R. (9a) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.
14. Psalm 77:3 and 4bc, 23-24, 25, 54.  
R. (24b) The Lord gave them bread from heaven.
15. Psalm 109:1, 2, 3, 4.  
R. (4bc) You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchisedech.
16. Psalm 115:12-13, 15 and 16bc, 17-18.  
R. (13) I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.
17. Psalm 144:10-11, 15-16, 17-18.  
R. (cf. 16) The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.
18. Psalm 147: 12-13, 14-15, 19-20.  
R. (John 6, 59b) Whoever eats this bread will live for ever.

### Alleluia Verse and Verse before the Gospel

19. John 6:57 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live in me and I in him, says the Lord.

20. John 6:58 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father,  
so he who eats me will live because of me.
21. John 6:35 The Lord says: I am the bread of life.  
A man who comes to me will not go away hungry,  
and no one who believes in me will thirst.
22. John 6:51-52 I am the living bread from heaven, says the Lord;  
if anyone eats this bread he will live for ever.

#### Gospel

23. Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 This is my body. This is my blood. (no. 169)
24. Luke 9:11b-17 They all ate and were filled. (no. 170)
25. Luke 24:13-35 They had recognized him at the breaking of the bread. (no. 263)
26. John 6:1-15 He gave the food to those who were sitting around, as much as they wanted. (no. 111)
27. John 6:24-35 He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst. (no. 114)
28. John 6:41-52a I am the living bread that came down from heaven. (no. 117)
29. John 6:51-59 My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. (No. 120)
30. John 21:1-14 Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and the same with the fish. (no. 265)

—FOR ADMISSION TO  
CANDIDACY FOR THE  
DIACONATE AND  
PRESBYTERATE

#### Readings from the Old Testament

1. Deuteronomy 1:9-14 Choose wise men from among you and I shall make them your leaders.
2. Jeremiah 1:4-8 You will go to all the places which I will send you. (no. 397)
3. Sirach 39:1, 5-8 He offers his heart to the Lord at dawn to keep the watch. (no. 725)



4. Isaiah 6:2a, 3-8 Whom shall I send? and who will go for us? (no. 398)

#### Readings from the New Testament

5. Acts 14:21-23 They appointed presbyters for every church (no. 55)
6. 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23 Punishment will come to me if I do not preach the gospel. (no. 75)
7. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 One and the same Spirit distributes different gifts as he chooses. (no. 67)
8. 2 Timothy 3:10-12, 14-15 Continue in what you learned. (no. 357)

#### Responsorial Psalms

9. Psalm 15:1-2a and 5, 7-8, 11.  
R. (cf. 5a) You are my inheritance, O Lord.
10. Psalm 23:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6.  
R. (cf. 6) Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.
11. Psalm 97:1, 2-3ab, 3c-4, 5-6.  
R. (2b). The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

#### Alleluia Verse and Verse before the Gospel

12. Mark 1:17 Come, follow me, says the Lord,  
and I will make you fishers of men.
13. Luke 4:18-19 The Lord sent me to bring Good News to  
the poor,  
and freedom to prisoners.
14. John 12:26a If you serve me, follow me, says the Lord;  
and where I am, my servant will also be.

#### Gospel

15. Matthew 9:35-38 Ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to the harvest. (no. 384)

16. Mark 1:14-20 I will make you into fishers of men. (no. 69)
17. Luke 5:1-11 At your word I will lower the nets. (no. 76)
18. John 1:35-42 Look, there is the Lamb of God. We have found the Messiah. (no. 66)
19. John 1:45-51 There is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit. (no. 209)



