**Holy Orders**

Holy Orders is one of the two sacraments “at the service of communion”. It, along with Matrimony, is directed toward the salvation of others.

Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.

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**The Sacrament of Holy Orders**

This is the sacrament by which men receive the power and the grace to perform the sacred duties of bishops, priests, and other ministers of the church.

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**Who may receive the Holy Orders worthily?**

A baptized man who:

- Is in the state of grace and of excellent character.
- Has the prescribed age and learning.
- Has the intention of devoting his life to the sacred ministry.
- Is called to Holy Orders by his bishop.
- Is (under normal circumstances) ready to embrace celibacy freely and who publicly manifests his intention of remaining celibate for the love of God’s kingdom and the service of men.

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**Do religious brothers and sisters (nuns) receive Holy Orders?**

No, but they have received from God a vocation to dedicate their lives to His service.

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**What is a vocation to the priesthood?**

It is an invitation by the bishop or his representative to receive Holy Orders given to a man who, after a sufficient period of preparation and trial, gives signs that God has called him to the priesthood.

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**What are some of the important signs that God has called a man to the priesthood?**

- A sincere desire to be a priest.
- A virtuous life.
- Sufficient bodily health and intellectual ability to enable him to make the required studies and to perform the duties of the priestly life.

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**The whole Church is a priestly people**

However,

- Through baptism, all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ. This is called the common priesthood.
- The ordained priesthood is also called the ministerial priesthood. The ordained priests exercise their service for the People of God by (1) teaching, (2) divine worship (celebrating mass) and (3) pastoral governance (authority within the church).

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**What are the 3 degrees of Holy Orders?**

- **Episcopate** – “The fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders” reserved for bishops. The Pope is a bishop – the bishop of Rome.
- **Presbyterate** – ordination of priests, co-workers of the bishops.
- **Diaconate** – ordination of deacons, “in order to serve.” Deacons may assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, especially at mass, assisting at and
blessing marriages, proclaiming the Gospel and preaching, presiding over funerals and dedicating themselves to various ministries of charity.

**Who may administer Holy Orders?**
The bishop is the minister this sacrament.

**What are the effects of ordination to the priesthood?**
- **Increase in sanctifying grace**
- **Sacramental grace** through which the priest has God’s constant help in his sacred ministry.
- **A character or mark on the soul**, lasting forever, which is a special sharing in the priesthood of Christ and which gives the priest supernatural powers.

**What are the chief supernatural powers of the priest?**
- To change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Mass.
- To forgive sins in the sacrament of Penance.

**Why should we show honor and reverence to priests?**
The priest is a representative of Christ Himself and the dispenser of His mysteries. “The priest is indeed another Christ, or in some way he is himself a continuation of Christ.” [Pope Pius XI, Encyclical on the Priesthood]

**Respect for the Priesthood - A Story**

“ST. FRANCIS ASSISI’S RESPECT FOR THE PRIESTHOOD”

As St. Francis was one day conversing with some of his brethren on the respect due to priests, he said these words: “If I should happen to meet on the way an angel and a priest walking together I would salute the priest in the first place, and then angel.”

And, seeing that some of them desired to know the reason of this, he added: “I would salute the priest in the first place because he is the representative of Jesus Christ Himself, whereas the angel, great as he is, is only his servant.”

**References**

