

The Catholic Rite of Holy Orders

According to the Traditional Catholic Rite of Holy Orders

by A. Biskupek, S.V.D

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Archbishop of Chicago

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The Tonsure The Clerical Haircut

Tonsure, from the Latin tonsura, denotes the cutting of the hair as well as the shaven crown worn by clerics as a distinctive mark of their state.

The origin of the tonsure must probably be sought in the custom prevailing among the Romans of shaving the head of a slave. Confessors of the faith were in some cases treated in the same manner out of contempt and mockery. To proclaim themselves' slaves of Christ monks at a very early date began to shave their heads. Toward the beginning of the sixth century clerics gradually adopted the custom of the monks, however in a modified form, not shaving the whole head, but leaving a narrow crown of hair. In this form the tonsure is still worn by members of some religious orders. Generally, however, it was greatly reduced in size until it now resembles a half-dollar coin. In some countries, where Catholics form a minority among a non-Catholic population, as in the United States, the tonsure is not worn.

In the beginning no special rite was employed for the bestowal of the first tonsure. When a man decided to devote himself to the service of God and was assigned to the personnel of a certain church, he began to wear the tonsure. In the course of time suitable ceremonies were developed for the adoption into the clerical state. For a long time these ceremonies formed part of the rite, by which the first minor order was conferred, and it was probably only in the eighth century that the bestowal of the first tonsure became a separate rite. The wearing of the tonsure was made obligatory for all clerics during the middle Ages.

Tonsure is not an order, since no office and no spiritual power is conferred by it. It is a sacred rite, by which a layman is received into the clerical state, and the prerequisite for the reception of orders. The word cleric is derived from the Greek kleros, which means portion or inheritance. The choice of the term is suggested by the words of God addressed to the tribe of Levi, by which the clerics were typified: "You shall possess nothing in their land; neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel" (Numb 18, 20). St. Jerome, commenting on the passage, thus interprets the word cleric: "They are called clerics, because they are the portion of the Lord and because the Lord is their portion." The Lord has chosen the clerics for His special service, and they have freely accepted the choice. In order to give themselves with wholehearted and undivided attention to the service of God, they renounce the pursuit of secular vocations. However, they

are not left without the means of living in conformity with their state, for "they that serve the altar partake with the altar. So also the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9,13 f). As in the Old Testament the Levites were supported by the rest of the people by the payment of tithes, first fruits, and a definite share of the sacrifices, so priests are supported by the faithful, the chosen people of the New Testament.

The word clergy, strictly speaking, designates all persons who have received the tonsure, even though they are not priests; however, popular usage commonly restricts its meaning to priests only.

Tonsure may be conferred on any day and at any hour of the day. If tonsure is conferred during Mass, this is done:

Saturdays of Ember weeks and Holy Saturday: after the Kyrie.

Saturday before Passion Sunday: after the Introit.

On other days, if the Mass has Gloria: after the Kyrie; if the Mass has no Gloria: after the Introit.

The candidates present themselves for ordination dressed in a cassock. On their left arm they carry a surplice and in their right hand a burning candle.

The Rite

The Call. The bishop, with his mitre on, sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names:

**Let those who are to be promoted to the first clerical tonsure come forward:
N. N. etc.**

Each one answers *adsum*, i.e., present, goes before the altar and kneels, holding the burning candle in his right hand. The bishop rises and prays:

Prayer

V. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

R. From henceforth, now, and forever.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made heaven and earth.

Let us pray, dearly beloved brethren, to the Lord Jesus Christ for these His servants, who for the sake of His love hasten to offer the hair of their heads. May He bestow upon them the Holy Spirit, to preserve in them forever the spirit of piety and protect their hearts against the entanglements of the world and worldly ambition. And as they are changed in outward appearance, may His right hand grant them an increase of virtue, deliver their eyes from all

blindness, spiritual and human, and bestow on them the light of everlasting grace. Who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

The Cutting of the Hair. Here the choir begins and continues the following antiphon and psalm (Ps. 15, 1-5):

Antiphon

It is Thou, O Lord, that wilt restore my inheritance to me.

Psalm

Preserve me, O Lord, for I have put my trust in Thee. I have said to the Lord: Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods.

To the saints who are in His land, He hath made wonderful all my desires in them.

Their infirmities were multiplied: afterward thy made haste.

I will not gather together their meetings for blood offerings, nor will I be mindful of their names by my lips.

The whole antiphon is repeated:

It is Thou, O Lord, that wilt restore my inheritance to me.

While the psalm is being sung, the candidates are tonsured. The bishop cuts some hair from the head of each, in five places, so as to form a cross: in front and in the back, above the right and the left ear, and from the crown of the head. At the same time the bishop pronounces the following words, which the candidate repeats after him:

The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup. It is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me (Ps. 15,5).

Having tonsured all, the bishop, miter off, rises and facing the candidates prays:

Let Us Pray

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that these Thy servants whom, prompted by divine love, we have tonsured today, may always remain in Thy love, and do Thou keep them forever without stain. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

The choir now sings the following antiphon and Psalm 23. As soon as they have begun, the bishop, miter on, seats himself.

Antiphon

These shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God their Savior, because they are the generation of them that seek the Lord.

Psalm

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein.

For He hath founded it upon the seas: and hath prepared it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place?

The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor.

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God his Savior.

This is the generation of them that seek Him, of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord who is the strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the King of glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

Glory be, etc.

As it was, etc.

Here the whole antiphon is repeated.

These shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God their Savior, because they are the generation of them that seek the Lord.

The bishop, miter off, rises, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

The assistants: Let us bend our knees.

R. Arise.

Turning toward the tonsured he prays:

Here, O Lord, our humble prayer, and vouchsafe to bless these Thy servants. In Thy holy name we now invest them with the garb of holy religion. May they, by Thy help, remain faithful in Thy Church and merit to attain life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

The Investiture with the Surplice.

The bishop now seats him self and, miter on, invests the candidates with the surplice, saying to each:

May the Lord clothe thee with the new man, who is created according to God in justice and true holiness.

The bishop rises, with his miter off, and prays:

Let Us Pray

Almighty, eternal God, forgive our sins and deliver these Thy servants from all slavery of secular fashions, so that, as they renounce the ignominy of worldly style, they may possess Thy grace forever. And as we make them wear the likeness of Thy crown upon their heads, may they, by Thy help, merit to attain within their hearts the everlasting inheritance. Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit livest and reignest, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

Admonition. The bishop seats himself and, miter on, addresses the candidates as follows:

Dearly beloved sons, you should consider that today you have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Church and have received the privileges of clerics. Take care, lest you forfeit them through you fault. Strive to be pleasing to God by modest dress, becoming demeanor, and good works. May He grant it to you by His Holy Spirit. R. Amen.

The Order of Porter

The Ostiariate -- the 1st of the Minor Orders

In the Old Testament Levites were appointed to keep the gates of the tabernacle and later of the temple; they also had charge of the sacred vessels (1 Paral. 9, 26). The sacredness of the house of God in the New Testament and of the vessels used for the celebration of the divine mysteries calls for at least the same care and safekeeping. The ostiarii were the doorkeepers or porters of the church. The word is derived from the Latin ostium, the door.

The office was of special importance during the times of persecution. Reliable men were needed to inform the faithful of the time and place of the divine services, to open and lock the doors, to keep out undesirables. In later times the ringing of bells sufficed for the purpose of informing the faithful of the time of the divine services, since there was no further need of informing them of the place.

Opening of the book for the preacher, mentioned as one of the duties of the porter, must also be understood in the light of earlier times. Those ancient rolls were not as handy as a modern book, but often heavy and of considerable size, and the place for reading could not be found as

readily. The porter, therefore, would carry the book to the ambo and open it for the preacher. In the course of time the care of the sacred vessels was also entrusted to porters, which gave the order added importance.

It seems probable that up to the fourth century porters were not ordained, but simply appointed. In our days the duties of porters are usually performed by sacristans, ushers, and janitors.

If the ostiarate is conferred during Mass, this is done:

Saturday before Passion Sunday: after the Kyrie.

Holy Saturday: after the Gloria.

On other days, if the Mass has Gloria: after the Gloria; if the Mass has no Gloria: after the Kyrie.

The Rite

The Call. **The bishop, with his miter on, sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names:**

**Let those come forward who are to be ordained to the order of porter: N. N.
etc.**

Each one answers, *adsum*, goes before the altar and kneels, holding the burning candle in his right hand.

The Instruction. **When all are assembled, the bishop addresses them as follows:**

Dearest beloved sons, you are about to receive the order of porter. Behold what you must do in the house of God. The duty of the porter is to ring the bells, to open the church and sacristy, and to open the book for the preacher. Take good care, therefore, lest anything in the church perish through your negligence. Open the house of God to the faithful at the appointed hours, and always shut it to unbelievers.

As you open and shut with material keys the visible church, let it also be your endeavor by your word and example to shut to the devil and open to God the invisible house of God, namely, the hearts of the faithful, that they may keep in mind the word of God which they have heard and carry it out in deed. May the Lord in His mercy accomplish this in you.

Here the candles are laid aside.

The Bestowal of the Office. **The bishop presents to each one the keys of the church. They touch them with the right hand, while the bishop says:**

So act, even as about to give an account to God of the things which are kept under these keys.

The archdeacon, or the one who takes his place, now conducts the candidates to the door of the church, which they lock and unlock; then to the tower, where the bell rope is handed them, and each rings the bell with one stroke. Should thee be no tower, or should the tower be too far away or too difficult of ascent, the sacristy bell, or a small bell, placed at the church door, may be used. The candidates are then conducted back to the altar.

Prayer. The porters kneel, while the bishop, with miter on, turned to the ordained, prays:

Dearely beloved brethren, let us fervently beseech God, the Father Almighty, to + bless these His servants, whom He has deigned to elect to the office of porter; may they with utmost care attend to the house of God, by day and night and announce the hours appointed for divine services, through the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The bishop, with his miter off, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

Let us bend our knees. R. Arise.

Turning again to the candidates kneeling before him, the bishop prays:

Holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, bless + these Thy servants for the office of porter, that among the keepers of the Church they may be devoted to Thy service and together with Thine elect have a share in Thy reward. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The Order of Reader

The Lectorate -- the 2nd of the Minor Orders

The lector is a reader. Readings from the sacred books formed part of the divine services even in the Old Testament. In the Christian Church such readings were incorporated from the very beginning into the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery. The first part of holy Mass constituted the so-called Mass of the catechumens, or instruction service, for those who prepared for baptism and were not allowed as yet to assist at the whole Mass. The instructions were based on Holy Scripture, and the reader would read the text.

It must be remembered that the ancient manuscripts were not as easy to read as a modern book. No distinction was made between small letters and capitals, words were not clearly separated, punctuation marks not used. Reading, therefore, required careful preparation in order to be done correctly, fluently, and distinctly.

It seems that in the beginning capable laymen took care of this reading, but at a very early date readers were ordained; even boys possessing the necessary knowledge were admitted to this order.

As the Mass of the catechumens lost its original significance, and reading at the divine services was taken over more and more by members of the major orders, readers began to form the schola cantorum and took care of the singing, probably before the seventh century.

The rite mentions as another duty of lectors the blessing of bread and first fruits. The faithful as well as the catechumens would bring along these things to be blessed, and since the catechumens were dismissed before the beginning of the Mass of the faithful, it was convenient that the lector should perform the blessing before they left. Canon 1147 reaffirms this privilege of the lector. It is the only case where a cleric in minor orders is authorized to perform a blessing.

At the present time it is customary in seminary chapels that a reader sings the Epistle during a simple High Mass; but the singing of the Epistle at the solemn High Mass is reserved to the subdeacon. Readers, however, sing the prophecies on Holy Saturday and the Saturday before Pentecost.

If the lectorate is conferred during Mass, this is done:

Saturday before Passion Sunday: after the Kyrie.

Holy Saturday: after the Gloria.

Saturdays of Ember weeks: after the second lesson.

On other days, if the Mass has Gloria: after the Gloria; if the Mass has no Gloria: after the Kyrie.

The Rite

The Call. The bishop, with his miter on, sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names:

Let those come forward who are to be ordained to the office of reader: N.N., etc.

Each one answers, *adsum*, goes before the altar and kneels, holding the burning candle in his right hand.

The Instruction. When all are assembled, the bishop address them as follows:

Dearely beloved sons, chose to be readers in the house of our God, know your office and fulfill it; for God is powerful to give you in increasing measure the grace of everlasting perfection.

The reader's duty is to read what he preaches (or: to read the Scripture text for the preacher), to sing the lessons, to bless bread and all new fruits. Endeavor, therefore, to read the word of God, that is, the sacred lessons, distinctly and intelligibly, without any mistake or falsification, so that the faithful may understand and be edified, and that the truth of the divine

lessons be not through your carelessness lost for the instruction of the hearers.

But what you read with your lips, you must believe in your hearts and practice in your works; so that you may be able to teach your hearers by word and example.

Therefore, when you read, stand in a high place of the church, so that you may be heard and seen by all. This your bodily position is to signify that your life ought to move on a high plane of virtue, so that you may give the example of a heavenly life to all those by whom you are heard and seen. May God by His grace accomplish this in you.

Here the candles are laid aside.

The Bestowal of the Office. The bishop now presents to the candidates the book containing the lessons, that is, a missal, breviary, or bible. The ordinands touch it with the right hand, while he says:

Receive, and be readers of the word of God. If you fulfill your office faithfully and profitably, yours will be the reward of those who have duly administered the word of God from the beginning.

Prayer. The bishop rises and prays:

Let us beseech, beloved brethren, God, the Father Almighty, graciously to bless these servants whom He deigns to assume into the order of reader. May they intelligibly read what is to be read in the Church of God, and carry it out in works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, who lives and reigns with Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The bishop, with miter off, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

Let us bend our knees. R. Amen.

Turning again to the candidates kneeling before him, the bishop prays:

Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, vouchsafe to + bless these Thy servants for the office of reader. May they by constant application to reading acquire knowledge and proficiency, read aloud what must be done and practice what they have read, so that by the example of their virtue in both respects they may give support to holy Church. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The Order of Exorcist

The Exorcistate -- the 3rd of the Minor Orders

To exorcise means to deliver a person from the presence or influence of evil spirits. That the devil, within the limits allowed by God, has retained a certain power over men even after the coming of Christ is clearly testified by Holy Scripture and the history of the Church. Jesus drove out devils from the possessed and He bestowed this power upon His apostles and disciples. In the early times of the Christian era many lay persons possessed this power as a charism.

It is in harmony with reason and faith to assume that the devil has greater power over the unbaptized in consequence of original sin. For this reason, at a very early date, exorcisms were performed repeatedly over the catechumens in preparation for baptism. To perform these exorcisms and, in general, to exorcise persons possessed by or under the influence of evil spirits exorcists were ordained.

The rite speaks of exorcists as spiritual physicians endowed with the power of healing. This may also refer to bodily afflictions caused by the devil; once the influence of the devil is broken by the exorcism, the affliction ceases.

The other duties of the exorcist stood in close relation to this principal function of the order. According to the usual interpretation of the instruction read to the ordinands, he was to direct persons under exorcism, and for that reason barred from Holy Communion, when to withdraw. Furthermore, it was his duty at sacred functions to administer the water for the washing of hands to the officiating priest. The latter ceremony symbolizes purification from sin, hence a banishing of the influence of the evil spirits; it was fitting, therefore, to assign this duty to the exorcist.

In our days all baptismal exorcisms are embodied in the solemn rite of baptism, and are performed by the priest or deacon who baptizes. To exorcise a person possessed by the devil an explicit permission of the diocesan bishop is required, and it can be given only to a priest.

If the Exorcistate is conferred during Mass, this is done:

Saturday before Passion Sunday: after the Kyrie.

Holy Saturday: after the Gloria.

Saturdays of Ember weeks: after the third lesson.

On other days, if the Mass has Gloria: after the Gloria; if the Mass has no Gloria, after the Kyrie.

The Rite

The Call. The bishop, with his miter on, sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names:

**Let those come forward who are to be ordained to the office of exorcist: N.
N., etc.**

Each one answers *adsum*, goes before the altar and kneels, holding the burning candle in his right hand.

The Instruction. When all are assembled, the bishop addresses them as follows:

Dearely beloved sons, as you are about to be ordained to the office of exorcist, you must understand the office which you receive. The duty of the exorcist is to cast out devils, to direct the people that he who is barred from Communion should withdraw, and to administer water at the sacred functions. You receive, therefore, the power to lay your hands upon the possessed; and by the imposition of your hands, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the words of the exorcism, the unclean spirits shall be cast out from the bodies of the possessed.

Accordingly, as you cast out devils from others, seek to remove from your own minds and bodies all uncleanness and iniquity, lest you be overcome by those evil spirits whom, in virtue of your office, you cast out of others. Through the exercise of your office learn to rule over evil habits, lest the enemy discover in your lives anything which he might claim as his own. For then you will consistently command the evil spirits in others when you first overcome their manifold wickedness in yourselves. May the Lord through His Holy Spirit grant that you may accomplish this.

Here the candles are laid aside.

The Bestowal of the Office. The candidates now come up to the bishop, and each touches the book which he presents to them, saying:

Receive, and commit to memory, and have the power to lay your hands upon the possessed, be they baptized or catechumens.

Prayer. The bishop rises and prays for the candidates kneeling before him:

Let us, dearely beloved brethren, humbly beseech God, the Father Almighty, that He may graciously + bless these His servants for the office of exorcist. May they be spiritual commanders, to cast out of the bodies of the possessed the evil spirits with all their manifold wickedness. Through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The bishop, with his miter off, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

Let us bend our knees. R. Arise.

Turning again to the candidates kneeling before him, the bishop prays:

Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, vouchsafe to bless these Thy servants for the office of exorcist. May they have power and authority, by the imposition of their hands and the word of prayer, to restrain the unclean spirits and be the approved physicians of Thy Church, endowed with the power of healing and with heavenly strength. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The Order of Acolyte

The Acolytate -- the 4th and highest of the Minor Orders

The acolytate is the highest of the minor orders. The term is derived from a Greek word which signifies to follow, to accompany. The acolyte's duty and privilege was and is to assist members of the major orders at the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and other liturgical functions; he takes care of the light and serves the wine and water at holy Mass.

Light was always extensively used at divine services, even in the Old Testament, because of its deep significance. To the symbolic reasons was added the practical necessity, when services were held at nighttime or, as it frequently happened during the times of persecution, in the catacombs.

For a long time, acolytes performed other very important functions, at least in the Church of Rome. At the Communion of the Mass they received the sacred species in linen bags, hung around their neck, and presented them to the priest or bishop for distribution to the people. As we know from the story of St. Tarsicius, acolytes were employed to bring the Blessed Eucharist to the absent, especially the confessors of the faith detained in prison; they, likewise, carried consecrated particles from the pope's Mass to the priests, who celebrated the sacred mysteries in the parish churches of Rome; finally, they were the bearers of the blessed bread, eulogia, which bishops exchanged among themselves as a symbol of their communion in the charity of Christ.

In the course of time, however, some of these functions were discontinued, others were taken over by members of the major orders. And, because of the practical difficulty of having ordained acolytes stationed at every church, laymen, especially boys, were admitted to act as Mass servers and torchbearers, and the order of acolyte merely served as a transition to the major orders.

If the acolytate is conferred during Mass, this is done:

Saturday before Passion Sunday: after the Kyrie.

Holy Saturday: after the Gloria.

Saturdays of Ember weeks: after the fourth lesson.

On other days, if the Mass has Gloria: after the Gloria; if the Mass has no Gloria: after the Kyrie.

The Rite

The Call. The bishop, with miter on sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names:

**Let those come forward who are to be ordained to the office of acolyte: N.
N., etc.**

Each one answers adsum, goes before the altar and kneels, holding the burning candle in his right hand.

The Instruction. When all are assembled, the bishop addresses them as follows:

Dearest beloved sons, about to receive the office of acolyte, consider what it is that you receive. The duty of the acolyte is to carry the candlestick; to light the lights of the church, to minister wine and water at the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Hence, endeavor to discharge worthily the office received. For you cannot be pleasing to God if in your hands you carry the light for God and in your works are slaves of darkness and thus give to your fellowmen the example of faithlessness.

Rather, as the Truth says: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." And as the apostle Paul says: "In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Therefore, let your loins be girt and burning lamps in your hands, that you may be children of the light. Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk then as children of the light."

What is to be understood by that light on which the Apostle insists so much, he himself explains when he adds: "For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth."

Be fervent, therefore, in all justice and goodness and truth, that you may enlighten yourselves and others and the Church of God. For then you will worthily minister wine and water at the divine Sacrifice when you have offered yourselves as a sacrifice to God by a chaste life and good works. May the Lord in His mercy grant it to you.

Here the candles are laid aside.

The Bestowal of the Office. The bishop now presents to each candidate a candlestick with an unlighted candle. Each one touches both, the candlestick with the thumb, and the candle with the index finger of the right hand, while the bishop says:

Receive the candlestick with the candle, and know that it is your duty to light the lights of the church in the name of the Lord.

The acolyte answers: Amen.

Then an empty cruet is presented to them. They touch it, while the bishop says:

Receive the cruets, to minister wine and water for the Eucharist of the blood of Christ, in the name of the Lord.

The acolyte answers: Amen.

Prayer. The candidates kneel. The bishop rises, with miter on, and, turned toward them, prays:

Dearly beloved brethren, let us humbly beseech God, the Father Almighty, to + bless these His servants in the order of acolyte, that as they carry the material light in their hands, they may also send forth a spiritual light by their conduct, through the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with Him and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The bishop, with his miter off, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

Let us bend our knees. R. Amen.

Turning again to the candidates kneeling before him, the bishop prays:

Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, Thou hast sent the light of Thy glory into this world through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, and His apostles, and hast willed that, in order to blot out the ancient debt of our death He should be fastened to the most glorious standard of the Cross and that blood and water should flow from His side, for the salvation of the human race. Vouchsafe to + bless these Thy servants for the office of acolyte, that they may faithfully serve at Thy holy altars, attend to the lighting of Thy Church, and minister wine and water for the consecration of the blood of Christ, Thy Son, at the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Enkindle, O Lord, their minds and hearts with they love of Thy grace, so that, alight with they splendor of Thy countenance, they may faithfully serve Thee in holy Church. Through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Let Us Pray

Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, who didst speak to Moses and Aaron that lamps should be lighted in the Tabernacle of the Testimony, bless + these Thy servants, that they may be acolytes in Thy Church. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

Let Us Pray

Almighty, everlasting God, Fountain of light and Source of goodness, who has enlightened the world through Jesus Christ Thy Son, the true light, and hast redeemed it through the mystery of His Passion, vouchsafe to + bless these Thy servants whom we ordain to the office of acolyte. We beseech Thee in Thy mercy to illumine their minds with the light of knowledge, and to refresh them with the dew of Thy tender love, that with Thy help they may so

fulfill the office assumed as to attain an everlasting reward. Through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

The Major Orders
The Subdiaconate
The Diaconate
The Priesthood

The Order of Subdeacon
The Subdiaconate -- the 1st of the Major Orders

The subdiaconate is the order which is under, or next to, the diaconate. As with the growth of the Church the work of deacons increased, and also divine services were celebrated with greater solemnity, holy Church introduced this order and assigned to its members some of the functions that before had been taken care of by deacons. This must have been done before the middle of the third century.

Although the subdiaconate is not a sacrament, it has been counted a major order since the beginning of the thirteenth century at the latest. The reason for giving it such a high rank lies in the functions and obligations attached to the order.

The subdiaconate is the decisive step in the life of the cleric. Whereas the minorite may return to secular pursuits, if he chooses to do so, the subdeacon assumes the obligation of observing perfect chastity in the unmarried state and of reciting the Divine Office, both for life.

It is not certain when celibacy became a law for the subdeacon, but it must have been rather early, since St. Gregory mentions it about the year 600.

The recitation of the Divine Office grew out of the custom, found already in the Old Testament, of reciting prayers at stated hours, i.e., the third, sixth, and ninth hour. It was but natural that the monks from the very beginning of the monastic life should adopt this custom. In the course of time the prayers were given a more definite form, and the number of hours was increased to seven to bring them in conformity with the psalmist's words: "Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee." (Ps. 118, 164). Psalms made up the principal part of the Office. The obligation for secular clerics to recite the Divine Office publicly and in common is met first in the fifth century. For a long time the obligation was incumbent only on those clerics who held some benefice. It was only toward the end of the twelfth century that all members of the major orders were obliged to the private recitation of the Office.

According to the present discipline of the Church the subdeacon assists at solemn liturgical functions and sings the Epistle during a solemn High Mass. He also washes the corporals, palls, and purificators, that have been used for the celebration of holy Mass. If no subdeacons are available, deacons or priests attend to these duties.

The features which appear in the ordination of subdeacons are:

1. The statement of the title under which the candidate is ordained.
2. The prostration and the Litany of the Saints.
3. The investiture with the insignia of the office.

Of these features, only the title calls for a brief explanation.

By *title*, we understand a certain guarantee or security insuring decent support to the cleric. Originally *title* designated the church to which a cleric was attached, the service of which entitled him to support. Holy Church wishes that clerics should be free from material cares, so as to be able to devote themselves wholly to priestly work. The customary titles in our days are, for secular priests: the title of benefice, of service of the diocese, of the missions; in the United States it is the title of the service of the Church. Religious priests are ordained to the title of poverty, or the title of the common table.

The subdiaconate is conferred:
Saturdays of Ember weeks: after the fifth lesson.
On all other days: immediately before the epistle.

The candidates present themselves for ordination dressed in alb, cincture, the amice loosely hanging about the neck. On their left arm they carry the tunic and maniple, and in their right hand a burning candle.

The Rite

The Call. The bishop, with his miter on, sits on the faldstool before the middle of the altar. The archdeacon bids the candidates come forward; the notary reads their names. There is added in this ordination to each name the title under which the candidate is to be ordained.

Let those who are to be ordained subdeacons come forward: N. N., to the title of the Church N.; N. N., to the title of his patrimony; to the title of the missions; Frt. N., of the Congregation of N., to the title of the common table. Each one answers: *adsum*, goes before the altar and stands, holding the burning candle in his right hand.

First Instruction. When all are assembled in the sanctuary, the bishop addresses them as follows. This instruction is left out if all the ordinands are religious, since religious have already taken the decisive step for life in their religious profession. In this case the candles are laid aside and the Litany of the Saints follows immediately.

Dearly beloved sons, you are to be promoted to the sacred order of subdeaconship. Again and again you must carefully consider the office for which you ask today of your own accord. For as yet you are free; if you so decided, you may lawfully pass over to secular pursuits; but after you have received this order, you will be free no longer to withdraw from the chosen course, but bound for life to the service of God, whom to serve is to rule. And you will be under obligation, with His help, to observe chastity and to employ yourselves in the ministry of the Church at all times. Therefore, while there

is time, reflect. If you decide to persevere in your holy resolve, come forward in the name of the Lord.

The ordinands advance one step. If there are also candidates for the diaconate and priesthood present, they are called now and come to the altar; if not, there follows the prostration and the [Litany of the Saints](#).

The litany finished, all rise. The bishop, with his miter on, takes his seat on the faldstool before the middle of the altar; if candidates for deaconship or the priesthood are present, the archdeacon announces in a loud voice:

Let those who are to be ordained deacons and priests return to their place. If there are no such ordinands, the bishop proceeds immediately to the ordination of the subdeacons.

Second Instruction. As the ordinands kneel before him, the bishop addresses them as follows:

Dearest beloved sons, who are to be ordained subdeacons, carefully consider what office is entrusted to you. The duty of the subdeacon is to prepare the water for the ministry of the altar, to assist the deacon, to wash the altar cloths and corporals, to hand to the deacon the chalice and paten used at the sacrifice.

The offerings which are brought to the altar are called the Loaves of Proposition. Of these offerings so much must be placed on the altar as will suffice for the people. There should be nothing in the tabernacle to decay.

The cloths which are used for the covering of the altar must be washed in one vessel; the corporals in another one. Where the corporals have been washed, no other linen is to be washed, and the water must be poured into the baptistry.

Endeavor, therefore, to perform these material services properly and with careful attention, and in a like manner to fulfill the spiritual obligations symbolized by them.

The altar of the holy Church is Christ, as John testifies, who says in his Apocalypse that he saw Him as a golden altar standing before the throne. In Him and through Him the gifts of the faithful are offered to God the Father. The palls and corporals of this altar are the members of Christ, namely, God's faithful; with these the Lord is clothed, as it were, with precious vestments as the psalmist says: "The Lord is king, He is clothed with beauty." Blessed John also saw in the Apocalypse the Son of Man girded with a golden cincture, that is, surrounded by the multitude of saints.

If, therefore, it should happen through human frailty that the faithful are defiled by some sin, you must minister to them the water of heavenly doctrine, so that, cleansed by it, they may again be an ornament of the altar and take part in the celebration of the divine Sacrifice.

Hence, be such as to worthily assist at the divine Sacrifice, and to serve the Church of God, which is the body of Christ. Be grounded in the true and Catholic faith; for, as the Apostle says; All that is not of faith is sin, and schism, and outside the unity of the Church.

And so, if hitherto you have been tardy as to the church, henceforth you must be prompt. If hitherto you have been prone to indulge in sleep, henceforth you must be vigilant. If hitherto you have been given to drink, henceforth you must be temperate. If hitherto you have been wanting in honor, henceforth you must be without reproach. May He deign to grant it to you, who lives and reigns, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The Bestowal of the Office. The bishop now presents to the ordinands and empty chalice with a paten. Each one touches both in such a way as to put the thumb against the cup of the chalice and the index finger upon the paten. At the same time the bishop says:

Behold what ministry is entrusted to you. Therefore, I exhort you so to conduct yourselves as to be pleasing to God.

The archdeacon presents to each candidate cruets filled with wine and water, also a basin and a towel; all of which the candidates touch in like manner.

Prayer for the Ordained. Then the bishop, with miter on, rises and, facing the people, prays:

Let us, dearly beloved brethren, beseech our God and Lord to pour out His + blessing and grace upon these His servants, whom He has deigned to call to the office of subdeaconship. May they be faithful ministers in His sight and attain the reward laid up for the saints, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

The bishop, with miter off, turns to the altar and says:

Let Us Pray

The assistants: Let us bend our knees. R. Arise.

Again the bishop turns to the ordained kneeling before him and prays:

Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, vouchsafe to + bless these Thy servants, whom Thou hast deigned to call to the office of subdeaconship. Make them in Thy holy temple valiant and watchful sentinels of the heavenly army, faithful ministers, of Thy holy altars. May the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge

and piety, rest upon them; fill them with the Spirit of Thy fear. Strengthen them in the divine ministry, so that, obedient to law and submissive to direction, they may obtain Thy grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who lives and reigns with Thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. R. Amen.

Investiture with the Insignia of the Office. The bishop sits, with his miter on, and invests the candidates with the amice which they wear around the neck, pulling it over their heads and saying:

Receive the amice, by which is signified moderation of speech. In the name of the + Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy + Ghost.

The subdeacon answers: Amen.

Then the bishop puts the maniple on the left arm of each candidate, saying:

Receive the maniple, by which are signified the fruits of good works. In the name of the + Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy + Ghost.

The subdeacon answers: Amen.

Then the bishop invests them with the tunic, the official garb of a subdeacon, saying:

May the Lord clothe thee with the tunic of gladness and the garment of joy. In the name of the + Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy + Ghost.

The subdeacon answers: Amen.

Finally, the bishop presents to the candidates the book of epistles, which they touch with the right hand, the bishop saying at the same time:

Receive the book of epistles and have the power to read them in the holy Church of God, for the living as well as for the dead. In the name of the + Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy + Ghost.

The subdeacon answers: Amen.

The archdeacon now directs the ordained to return to their places. The bishop continues the Mass, and while he reads the Epistle, one of the newly ordained subdeacons reads it aloud with him.

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We use all current Mass from Rome for all Major Order these or on this we Page
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