



Creative Festivals 2010-2011

Background Information

We present information on the Orders of Diaconate, Priesthood, and Episcopacy. We are grateful to Orthodoxwiki and www.antiochian.org, for this information.

Holy Orders

It is the belief of Orthodoxy that Christ is the only priest, pastor, and teacher of the Christian Church. He alone forgives sins and offers communion with God, his Father. Christ alone guides and rules his people. Christ remains with his Church as its living and unique head. Christ remains present and active in the Church through his Holy Spirit.

Through the sacrament of holy orders bishops give order to the Church. Bishops guarantee the continuity and unity of the Church from age to age and from place to place, that is, from the time of Christ and the apostles until the establishment of God's Kingdom in eternity. Bishops receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ in the Spirit to men. Bishops are neither vicars, substitutes, nor representatives of Christ. It is Christ, through his chosen ministers, who acts as teacher, good shepherd, forgiver, and healer. It is Christ remitting sins, and curing the physical, mental, and spiritual ills of mankind. This is a mystery of the Church.

The bishop wears a monastic garment called a mantiya when he arrives at a divine service. Unlike the typical monastic

mantiya, which is black, that of the bishop is some other color, purple for bishops and Greek metropolitans, blue for archbishops and non-Greek metropolitans, and green for a patriarch, and upon it are sewn the Tables of the Law, square patches at the neck and feet, characterizing the Old and New Covenants. In addition, strips of cloth, called fountains, are sewn horizontally around the mantiya, representing the streams of teachings which flow from the bishop's mouth.

In the slavonic traditions, a ruling bishop is usually liturgically vested in the center of his church. In the Greek traditions, bishops are often vested at the altar. In the Antiochian tradition, the bishop usually vests in the sanctuary.

Liturgically, except for the phelonion and the nabledrennik, a bishop wears all the vestments of a priest. The phelonion was at first part of the bishop's vestments but was replaced by a garment, similar to the deacon's sticharion called a sakkos (also *saccos*), a garment of humility. As Christ's robe was without seam, the bishop, as an icon of Christ, wears the saccos either sewn or buttoned at the sides.

Over the saccos, the bishop wears a wide shoulder covering called the omophorion. It hangs down in front and back, and symbolizes the wandering sheep which Christ took upon his shoulders as the Good Shepherd. In ancient times, was made of sheepskin. At other times at services, the bishop may wear a shorter omophorion that has both ends hanging down the front called the small omophorion

The bishop wears a richly embroidered crown, called a mitre. This is to represent the power conferred upon a minister of the Church.

Together with his pectoral cross, the bishop also wears a small, circular icon of the Savior or of the Mother of God, called the Panagia (All-Holy), or Engolpion, over his heart. This is to remind him that he must always bear in his heart our Lord and his Holy Mother, and thus his own heart must be pure.

An episcopal staff called a crozier is carried by the bishop, as a shepherd's crook, to be reminiscent that he is a shepherd of Christ's flock. It has a cross at the top, just above a double crook. This double crook is sometimes in the shape of serpents' heads, symbolizing the

serpent lifted up by Moses in the wilderness. (Now Christ lifted up on the Cross.)

Liturgical items

At services in the Slavic traditions, the bishop stands on a small round or oval rug, called orlets, upon which is represented an eagle hovering over a city. This symbolizes his rule over a city and the eagle reminds the bishop that by his teaching and life he must rise above his flock and be an example of one hopeful to the things of heaven.

In the Greek traditions, the bishop sits or stands at the bishop's throne on the south side of the church, on the solea. The back of the chair of this throne has an icon depicting Christ the King, and the bishop will first venerate this icon before occupying the throne.

At times during the services, the bishop blesses the faithful with two candlesticks, one with two candles called dikiri and the other with three called trikiri, the first symbolizing the two natures of Christ, the other symbolizing the three persons of the Holy Trinity

When and how is an ordination performed?

Only a bishop can perform an ordination. ***It takes:***

- One bishop to ordain a deacon or priest;
- and three bishops to ordain another bishop.

Although there are different prayers and procedures for the ordination of the three Holy Orders, all share three things in common:

- The laying on of hands by the bishop(s)
- The congregation's response of "Axios" (he is worthy to be ordained) as the bishop blesses each particular vestment and gives it to the person being ordained,
- and the act of being led by the bishop around the altar table three times.

Ordination is always performed during a Divine Liturgy.

However, the deacon, priest, and bishop are ordained during different parts of the service in relation to their role in the Church.

- A deacon's primary job is to assist the priest in giving Holy Communion. Therefore, he is ordained *after* the Holy Gifts have already been consecrated. He stands before the icon of the Christ from the beginning of the liturgy until this time.
- A priest's main duty is to offer the Holy Sacrifice and all the other services of the Church. He is ordained after the Great Entrance so that he can take part in the consecration of the gifts.
- A bishop's primary function is to teach the word of God. He is ordained after the Thrice-Holy Hymn so that he can deliver the sermon following the Gospel lesson.

The Ministry of the Episcopacy

Ordination (Consecration) of a Bishop

The priest, who is to be elevated to a bishop, is brought to the presiding bishop to receive the Laying-on-of-Hands. He is already in the sanctuary and in his priestly vestments. At this point he stands at the edge of the eagle-carpet and is asked what he believes and he says the Holy Symbol of Faith – *The First Confession*.

“I believe in One God, the Father almighty . . .

I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

Then he is led to the middle of the Eagle and the presiding Bishop asks of him:

“Reveal unto us yet more how you confess concerning the properties of the three Hypostases of the incomprehensible Godhead, and concerning the Incarnation of the Hypostatic Son and Word of God.”

The Bishop-elect reads *the Second Confession of Faith*:

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth . . .”

This is longer and a more detailed confession of the

relationship of the Holy Trinity; who and what each is; the two natures and wills of Christ; the traditions and interpretations of the Church, which are from God and men of God. That they venerate, not worship, the icons and anathematize strange teachings and confess Mary the Theotokos as having given birth in the flesh to One of the Trinity.

Essentially, this longer confession renounces the heresies and states more specifically what we confess about our Faith.

The Third Confession of Faith

This one is even longer. The Bishop-elect promises to keep the Canons of the Holy Apostles; the 7 Ecumenical Councils; and the pious Provincial Councils, as well as the Canons of the Holy Fathers.

They promise not to change the traditions of the Church and holy regulations; preserve the peace of the Church and not devise anything that is contrary to the Faith; will always honor and obey the Holy Synod and be of one mind with the Metropolitan/Archbishops and Bishops, brethren and . . .

. . . to rule the flock entrusted to him in the fear of God; to teach and strive against all heresies.

The main distinction for a bishop as from a priest is that the bishop kneels before the Gospel book, which is put over his head, and the 3 bishops pray the Prayer of

Consecration, then he is vested in his bishop vestments.

When priests are ordained they hold the lamb in their hands to symbolize that they are responsible for the souls entrusted to them.

"Laying on of hands" and "apostolic succession" are the really important concepts in ordination.

A bishop is the successor to the Apostles in the service and government of the Church. The bishop thus serves εις τόπον και τύπον Χριστού (in place and as a type of Christ) in the Church. No bishop in Orthodoxy is considered infallible. None has any authority over or apart from his priests, deacons, and people or the other bishops. They have the responsibility of maintaining the unity of the Church throughout the world by insuring the truth and unity of the faith and practice of their diocese. The bishop represent his particular diocese to the other churches or dioceses, and represents the Universal Church to his own particular priests, deacons, and people.

According to Church Law, bishops of an area must meet in councils. When doing so, the metropolitan or patriarchate presides administratively. In the Orthodox Church, from about the sixth century, it has been the rule that bishops are single men or widowers. Bishops are also usually in at least the first degree of monastic orders. To become a bishop, an Orthodox male must

be at least 35 years old. The bishop is the “overseer” of the congregation and clergy on a given area. A bishop’s primary function is to teach the word of God. Therefore, he is ordained after the Thrice-Holy hymn so that he can deliver the sermon following the Gospel lesson. It takes three bishops to ordain another bishop.

The Ministry of the Priesthood

Ordination of a Priest

Prayer read by Bishop as he holds his hand upon the head of the deacon, who is kneeling before the Holy Table:

“The divine grace, which always heals that which is infirm, and supplies that which is lacking, ordains, “N”, the most-pious Deacon to be a Priest. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-holy Spirit may come upon him.”

...

“O God, Who hast no beginning and no ending, Who are older than every created thing, Who honorest with the title of Presbyter them that are found worthy in this degree to minister sacredly the word of Thy truth: Do Thou Thyself, O Master of all, count this man worthy also, whom Thou art well-pleased to ordain through me, to receive, in a blameless course of life and an unswerving faith, this great grace of Thy Holy Spirit, and declare him Thy perfect servant, acceptable unto Thee in all things, and meetly exercising this great Priestly honor which Thou has granted unto him by Thy foreknowing power.”

...

“O God, great in power, and inscrutable in wisdom, wondrous

in counsels above the sons of men: Do Thou Thyself, O Lord, fill with the gift of Thy Holy Spirit this man, whom Thou are pleased to advance to the Priestly degree, that he may be worthy to stand blamelessly before Thine Altar, to proclaim the Gospel of Thy Kingdom, to minister sacredly the word of Thy truth, to offer unto Thee spiritual gifts and sacrifices, and to renew Thy people through the Font of Regeneration, that when he shall go to meet Thee at the Second Coming of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Thine Only-begotten Son, he may receive the reward of a good stewardship of his rank, according to the multitude of Thy goodness.”

A litany is recited and then the newly-ordained priest is vested by the bishop with shouts of “Axios”. Through the sacrament of holy orders, an ordination to priesthood is performed by the bishop. But this requires the consent of the whole people of God, so at a point in the service, the congregation acclaim the ordination by shouting *Axios!* (*He is worthy!*) The priesthood is joined to Christ who is our High Priest. The priest’s main duty is to offer the Holy Sacrifice and all the other services of the church. Therefore, he is ordained after the Great Entrance so that he can take part in the consecration of the gifts. It takes one bishop to ordain a priest.

An Orthodox Christian male of good moral character and faith must be called by God to the Holy Priesthood. He must be at

least 30 years old to become a priest. Orthodox priests are divided into two distinct groups, married clergy, and monastic clergy. In the Orthodox Church a married man may be ordained to the priesthood. His marriage, however, must be the first for both him and his wife. He may not remarry and continue in his ministry even if his wife should die. If a single man is ordained, he must remain monastic to retain his service. A priest-monk is called a hieromonk.

Ministry

It is Church doctrine that the clergy must strive to fulfill the grace given to them with the gift of the "laying on of hands" in the most perfect that they can. But the Church teaches that the reality and effectiveness of the sacraments of the Church, ministered by the presbyters, do not depend upon personal virtue, but upon the presence of Christ who acts in his Church by the Holy Spirit. The same as with bishops, it is Christ, through his chosen ministers, who acts as teacher, good shepherd, forgiver, and healer. It is Christ remitting sins, and curing the physical, mental and spiritual ills of mankind. The priest is an icon of Christ.

Priests normally exercise the function of pastors of parishes, a function which was normally done by the bishops in early times. They are rectors of the local congregations of Christians. They preside at the celebration of the liturgy and

teach, preach, counsel and exercise the ministries of forgiveness and healing.

appoint a presbyter to pastor the flock in each congregation, acting as his delegate.

Since the priests are assigned by the bishop and belong to the specific congregations they have no authority or services to perform apart from their bishop and their own particular parish community. On the altar table of each parish, there is the cloth called the antimimension signed by the bishop, which is the permission to the community to gather and to act as the Church. Without the antimimension, the priest and his people cannot function legitimately.

History

The earliest organization of the Christian churches in Palestine was similar to that of Jewish synagogues, who were governed by a council of elders (*presbyteroi*). In Acts 11:30 and 15:22, we see this collegiate system of government in Jerusalem, and in Acts 14:23, the Apostle Paul ordains elders in the churches he founded. Initially, these **presbyters** were apparently identical with the **overseers** (*episkopoi*, i.e., bishops), as such passages as Acts 20:17 and Titus 1:5,7 indicate, and the terms were interchangeable.

Initially, each local congregation in the Church had its own bishop. Eventually, as the Church grew, individual congregations no longer were served directly by a bishop. The bishop in a large city would

The Ministry of the Diaconate

The **Deacon** is the third and lowest degree of the major orders of clergy in the Orthodox Church, following the bishop and the priest. The word *deacon* (in Greek δίακονος) means *server* and originally it referred to a person who waited on tables.

The deacon ministers to the priest and bishop in the divine services and assists in the celebration of the mysteries of the Church. A deacon may not, however, celebrate the mysteries by himself. With the blessing of the presiding priest or bishop, the deacon leads the people in the collective prayers and reads from the Holy Scriptures during the divine services. He is also responsible for the decorum of the public worship and calls the people to attention at appropriate times.

In addition, the deacon may perform other tasks related to Church life from time to time with the blessing and at the direction of his priest or bishop. A deacon may be blessed by his bishop and parish priest to distribute the Eucharist to the faithful, either from a second chalice at a regular liturgy where a priest is serving or in connection with a *typika* service that is celebrated when the priest is absent. In neither case, however, does the deacon consecrate the Holy Gifts. The deacon has no ability or authority to consecrate the Holy Gifts on his own.

To become a deacon, an Orthodox male must be at least 25 years old. He can be either married or single to become a priest or deacon, but must be married before his ordination (with the approval of his wife) or declare himself celibate.

Permanent office

In the Orthodox Church, the diaconate is not just a step to priesthood, many deacons have no intention of ever becoming priests. They see it as a permanent office, as a position for full or part time service to the work of the Church.

Originally deacons of the Church assisted the bishops in good deeds and works of charity. But at some time in recent centuries the diaconate has become an almost exclusive liturgical function where the deacons only assist at the celebration of the Church services. But today, deacons will often head educational programs and youth groups, perform hospital visitation, missionary work, and conduct social welfare projects.

Rankings of deacons

Sacramentally, all deacons are equal. However, they are ranked and serve by seniority according to the date of their ordination. Just as with bishops and presbyters, there are distinctions of administrative rank among deacons. A senior deacon of a cathedral or principal church may be awarded the title *protodeacon* and claim

precedence when serving with other deacons. The chief deacon who is attached to the person of a bishop is called an *archdeacon*. A deacon who is also a monastic is called a *hierodeacon*.

Deacon's vestments

The vestments of the deacon are the sticharion, the orarion, and the epimanikia.

All three degrees of major clergy wear the sticharion. The sticharion is a long-sleeved tunic that reaches all the way to the ground. It reminds the wearer that the grace of the Holy Spirit covers him as with a garment of salvation and joy. For deacons, the sticharion has wide sleeves and is made of a heavier fabric than that of the priest and bishop, who wear their sticharia under other vestments.

The second part of a deacon's vestments is the orarion. The orarion is a narrow band of material that the deacon wears wrapped around his body and draped over his left shoulder. It represents the grace of the Holy Spirit that in ordination anoints the deacon like oil. It is the principal vestment of the deacon and without it he cannot serve. When the deacon leads the people in prayers or invites them to attention he holds one end of his orarion in his right hand and raises it. The priest's epitachelion and the bishop's omophorion are specialized types of the orarion.

The final parts of a deacon's vestments are the epimanikia. The epimanikia are cuffs that are worn around the wrists, tied by a long cord. These are also worn by the bishop and priest. They serve the practical purpose of keeping the inner garments out of the way during the services. They also remind the wearer that he serves not by his own strength but with the help of God.

Before the deacon can don any of his vestments, he must first receive the blessing of the bishop or priest with whom he is serving.