

HOLY ORDERS

- Jesus passed on his authority to Peter and the other apostles by making Peter head of His church, by making the apostles priests at the Last Supper when he commanded “do this in remembrance of me” (Lk. 22:19), and by sending them out “to all the nations” to preach and baptize in his name (see Mt. 28:18-20). When the need arose, the apostles ordained other men to be their successors. (see Acts 1:20-26; 6:1-6) Only men are called to the Catholic Priesthood.

Three Degrees of Holy Orders

- Holy Orders is a call, neither a right nor a career choice.
- Unlike the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist to which God calls everyone, the call to receive Holy Orders is placed in the hearts of only some.
- In the Latin Rite, priests are required to be celibate (unmarried) “for the sake of the Kingdom” (Mt. 19:12). Bishops were required to be celibate from the 5th century onwards and priests from the 12th century.
- This celibacy helps those called to be more completely devoted to “the affairs of the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:32), particularly with regard to their role as “father” to the family of God, the Church.

- The early Church conferred (gave) and exercised the sacrament of Holy Orders in three different degrees: bishop, priest, and deacon (see Acts 6:1-6; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:7).
- Bishops receive the fullest degree of Holy Orders and can trace their ordination in apostolic succession back to the apostles.
- Already in the second century, the importance of apostolic succession for the preservation and purity of the Church’s doctrine is demonstrated by St. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, France who lists the unbroken chain of succession in Rome from St. Peter down to the pope of his day.
- Priests are also ordained into Jesus’ ministerial priesthood, but to a lesser degree than that of the bishop (episcopate).
- They are to be the bishop’s co-workers, and when they are ordained, they make a promise of obedience to him. Priests may be given responsibility for any of a bishop’s works or for parishes under his authority.
- As priests, they are given the power to forgive sin and to offer the Mass and anoint the Sick.
- Deacons are ordained by the bishop “not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry” (CCC 1569; LG 29; cf. *Christus Dominus* 15).

- As with priests, Deacons assist at the Mass, preach and teach, witness and bless marriages, preside at funerals, baptize

What are the Effects of Holy Orders?

- In Holy Orders, the baptized man is configured to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit. He becomes “another Christ.”
- This grace makes a permanent seal or spiritual character on his soul that conforms him in a deeper way to Christ and enables him to act in persona Christi. Like Baptism and Confirmation, the effect of this sacrament is permanent and therefore cannot be repeated or given temporarily.
- Also, the Holy Spirit gives specific sacramental graces to each recipient according to the office to which he is being ordained.
- **Bishops** receive specific graces that help them guide and defend the Church as shepherds and pastors of God’s people.
- **Priests** receive those graces that are proper to the duties of their office, among which are principally the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel, to baptize, to offer the Mass, to forgive sins and anoint the sick. Of course, the Priest has the responsibility to develop the gift of preaching by prayer and ongoing study of the

Scriptures. We often hear of 'poor preachers' and now we know why that might be.

- **And deacons**, who have been ordained to service, receive graces to help them carrying out their service toward the liturgy, the Gospel, and works of charity