

RCIA HO class 28

Holy Orders

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is that sacrament instituted by Christ to ensure that his ministry would be continued in the Church until the end of time. Christ at the Last Supper instituted the sacrament when He instructed His apostles to “Do this in memory of me”. That “doing” was to include not only the offering of the Mass, but also the self-sacrifice that Christ was to make of Himself on the Cross. Obviously, it also would include the forgiveness of sins (see John 20:22 ff.), preaching, and teaching (see Matt. 28:16 ff.). Holy Orders is conferred or administered only by a bishop and includes three different degrees: the episcopate (bishops), the presbyterate (priests), and the diaconate (deacons).

The **bishops** are understood by the Church to be the successors of the apostles. By means of what is called apostolic succession the power of the apostles to teach, govern, and sanctify the Church was passed down from the apostles to the bishops so that the mission of Christ would be continued. The bishops are said to have the “fullness” of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Each bishop is assigned a portion of the faithful, i.e. a diocese for whose souls he is responsible.

The **priesthood** was established when the number of the faithful became too large for the bishops to serve on their own. A priest is ordinarily ordained by a bishop to help that bishop carry out the ministry of teaching, governing, and sanctifying the souls in his diocese. Priests have the power (by ordination) and authority (with their bishop’s permission) to do everything a bishop does with regard to the administration of the sacraments except administer the sacrament of Holy Orders. Priests are thus co-workers with the bishop in his diocese. Priests do not marry because Jesus was not married. Furthermore, being unmarried they are able to devote all their time to the service of God’s people in imitation of Christ.

Deacons are ordained by the bishop for service to the People of God. Unlike the priests, the deacons are not empowered to say Mass, hear confessions, or administer the Sacrament of Anointing, which like Confession involves the forgiveness of sins. Above all the deacons assist with the distribution of Communion, witnessing marriages (outside of Mass), proclaiming and preaching the Gospel, presiding over funerals (outside of Mass), and carrying out the various charitable works of the Church, e.g. visiting the sick and needy.

Permanent deacons are those men chosen by the bishop for ordained service to him and his diocese. They are permitted to be married (and usually are).

Transitional deacons are those men who are passing through the period of diaconate on their way to ordination to the priesthood (usually for a period of about one year). Since they intend to become priests they do not marry.

All bishops have received all three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. They were ordained deacons, priests, and consecrated as bishops. All priests have been ordained as deacons on their way to priesthood. This is why the Church states that the bishops enjoy the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders while the priests and deacons have a share in the sacrament and in the ministry of the bishop. (See CCC 1536 ff.)

RCIA WKSH Class 28

Holy Orders

- 1) When did Jesus institute the Sacrament of Holy Orders?
- 2) What other Sacrament did He institute at the same time?
- 3) What are the three different grades of Holy Orders?
- 4) Bishops are the successors of the _____.
- 5) Who is our bishop?
- 6) What do we call the territory over which a bishop has authority?
- 7) Who is the head of all the bishops?
- 8) What are the three things (sacraments) that priests are ordained to do that the deacons are not ordained to do?
- 9) Why don't priests get married? (2 reasons)
- 10) Why aren't women ordained to the priesthood?
- 11) What are the names of the priests that serve our parish?
- 12) Deacons are ordained for _____ to the Catholic community.
- 13) What are the names of the deacons that serve our parish?
- 14) Why did Jesus institute the Sacrament of Holy Orders?
- 15) Who ordains the priests and deacons?