

Sacrament of Holy Orders

The Holy Scriptures and ancient Christian writers make it clear that from the apostles' time, there have been different ministries within the Church. In particular, since the time of the New Testament, three distinct orders of ordained ministers have been characteristic of Christ's Holy Catholic Church.

First, there is the order of Bishops who carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church. In His apostolic commission recorded in Matthew 28: 16-20 Jesus stated four things. In His parting words He instructed the eleven (referred to at other times as Apostles) to Teach, Baptize, and Make Disciples. Those three components constitute what Protestants call the Apostolic Commission. But there was a fourth part of this commission and that was His promise to always be with His Church. The early Church Fathers believed that the Order of Bishops was the visible sign of Jesus' Authority continually in and with His Church. The Bishops in Apostolic Succession therefore are icons of the Presence of Jesus with and in His Church through the spiritual authority conveyed by the Bishop.

Secondly, associated with them are the presbyters, or ordained elders, in subsequent times generally known as Priests. Together with the Bishops, they take part in the governance of the Church, in the carrying out of its missionary and pastoral work, and in the preaching of the Word of God and administering His Holy Sacraments.

Thirdly, there are Deacons who assist Bishops and Priests in all of this work. It is also a special responsibility of Deacons to minister in Christ's Name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless.

The persons who are chosen and recognized by the Church as being called by God to the ordained ministry are admitted to these Sacred Orders by solemn prayer and the laying on of episcopal hands. It has been, and is, the intention and purpose of the Church catholic and apostolic to maintain and continue these three orders; and for this purpose services of ordination and consecration are appointed. No persons are allowed to exercise the offices of Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the International Communion of The Charismatic Episcopal Church unless they are so ordained, or have already received such ordination with the laying on of hands by Bishops who are themselves duly qualified to confer Holy Orders.

Following the example of Jesus choosing men as His Apostles, the International Communion of The Charismatic Episcopal Church does not ordain or consecrate women to Holy Orders. We recognize the gifts of female members of this Communion and encourage their ministry to the people of God in ways other than through Holy Orders.

It is also recognized and affirmed that the threefold ministry is not the exclusive property of this portion of Christ's Catholic Church, but is a gift from God for the nurturing of His people and the proclamation of His Gospel everywhere. Accordingly, the manner of ordaining in this Church is to be such as has been, and is, most generally recognized by

Christian people as suitable for the conferring of the Sacred Orders of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. Such manner of ordaining is prescribed in the services of ordination pertaining to the particular Order of ministry.

(Part of the above comes from the Preface to Ordination in the Book of Common Prayer)