CHAPTER 6

ORDINATION: PRIESTHOOD AS THE LIVING IMAGE OF CHRIST

A. The Distinction between Ordination and the Other Mysteries

In each mystery, through His own activity, Christ gives the gift of Himself to those who believe in Him, and in the mystery of the Eucharist He makes this gift of Himself through His very body and blood. But because Christ cannot be seen, and because His will is that these gifts—namely, His body and blood—be given to us in a visible form, they must be given to us through persons who can be seen. He Himself chooses these persons and sanctifies them through the mystery of ordination. Thus, if in the other mysteries Christ is received as the one who gives us the gift of Himself through the priest, in the sacrament of ordination He pledges Himself as subject who is given to us invisibly by a human person; by consecrating this person as a priest or bishop, He makes His self-giving visible to us through the other sacraments. Whereas the other sacraments represent the visible means through which the priest mediates to us either a power from among the powers Christ imparts to us or else His very body and blood, the priesthood stamps a particular quality upon the visible person himself who carries out these means, a person through whom Christ imparts the gift of His powers or His body and blood in those mysteries.

If Christ had given Himself visibly to us or if He were not a person, indeed there would be no need for a person who could perform

the visible acts by which the Lord gives Himself to us. But because He gives Himself invisibly, Christ as subject seeks a visible form for Himself—or another subject as His visible form—through whom He can give Himself to us. A mystery, as means of a grace of Christ, cannot happen on its own. The priest, as the personal instrument of the mysteries, implies the personal character of Him who invisibly gives these mysteries their powers.

Without a human subject who might represent Christ as subject in a visible form, Christ as Person could not distribute His gifts, nor could He give His very self in the other sacraments, as He can through visible means. His self-giving could only happen in an invisible manner. This, however, would keep us locked into uncertainty as to whether Christ had really given Himself to us, or if we were simply the prey of various subjective illusions. We would not experience Christ as a subject distinct from ourselves in the person of the priest, who comes to meet us in the name of Christ. In any case, this state of affairs would feed an inescapable individualism that would destroy any unity of faith and hence the very purpose and assurance of any real revelation, of any salvation in Christ as a real fact. The Church and salvation in Christ thus depend on the priesthood.

The priest and bishop are instruments of the Church as a community. Through them the faithful receive the rest of the sacraments, or, through the sacraments celebrated by priests, the faithful simply attach themselves to the Church. Ordination makes the one who receives it a representative of the Church and celebrant of the mysteries through which the Church continues to exist and grow in space and time. Moreover, ordination is *par excellence* the mystery of the Church by the fact that it is the mystery that, through priests, makes Christ experienced as subject, distinct from the faithful. *Ordination is the precondition of the other mysteries, although it cannot fulfill its own mission without them.* At the beginning Christ was sent as the High Priest, and when He could no longer be seen physically, He left the apostles and their successors as visible high priests and as His instruments.

But if the priest and bishop are visible instruments through whom Christ Himself, as subject, imparts His gifts and His very self to those who believe, it is evident that they cannot take from within themselves this quality of being Christ's instruments in the impart-

ing of His powers. Neither can the Christian community impose these instruments upon Christ so that through them He Himself can impart the gift of His powers and His very self. But because the very acts on which the Church's existence depends are celebrated by the priest or bishop, the mystery of ordination, through which these persons are consecrated as celebrants, is a precondition for the extension and preservation of the Church. From the very moment of their ordination, the priest and bishop are established as centers and visible, intermediating means for the graces through which the Church is sustained, inasmuch as they are instruments of Christ, who is her invisible center and source. Their ordination, however, is not something that occurs outside the community but rather within its very bosom; it is carried out by those who are authorized to conduct the affairs of the community, that is, by the existing bishops, and bestowed upon those chosen from among the members of the Church. Moreover, the community guarantees that those who are ordained have been given to the Church through the agency of Christ Himself, for they are raised up to this status and role through a visible act performed by the existing bishops of the Church. This has continued since the time of the apostles: the Spirit of Christ makes certain members of the community priests and bishops, through the mediation of its existing bishops, who are successors of the apostles, and through the mediation of their prayer, which is accompanied by the prayer of the Church.

In the plan of creation, man was created as a subject according to the image of the Logos and as His partner. Man's mission is to gather within himself the reasons (*logoi*) of creation and to give them a rational conception in his own mind in order to offer them to the Logos, just as the Logos had already offered them as gift and content accessible to and necessary for the human spirit. In the same way, the priest and bishop are subjects according to the image of the incarnate Logos, who Himself has become, through His Incarnation, the fully restored Priest. They are to be the servants of this Priest in His work of gathering scattered humanity together in Himself. They do this through the sacramental, priestly empowerment imparted to them; through the spread of Christ's teaching, which brings unity to the world; and by guiding human beings on the path toward the incarnate Logos.

B. The Invisible Priesthood of Christ, Source of the Visible Priesthood of the Church

For the priest to be a personal image of the incarnate Word, it is necessary that Christ Himself be the original Priest and the source of the priesthood. In fact, through the Incarnation the very Word of God has become the Priest of creation *par excellence*; of the offering of creation to God; and of the renewed gathering together in God of all human beings, who had lost their primordial unity and been scattered abroad. But because human beings exist in this scattered state of disunity and arrogant, individualistic self-affirmation, not all of them can function as the priests of Christ's unifying activity. Christ, who became man in order to effect this gathering—an act at which humanity had suffered defeat—is the complete and unique Priest, because He is the only man who can give Himself to the Father with a devotion that is absolute. He does not merely wait, as before the Incarnation, for men to gather together in Him, in their common quality and role as priests, or for them to also gather creation together in this way, because men have not responded to this expectant waiting. Instead, He becomes man, wholly immaculate due to the power of His divine hypostasis, and hence *the central man*, the only man who has entry before the Father and can also take us there in Himself; He is the only human being truly able to bring about unification, for He did not become man for His own sake, enclosed within a limited human hypostasis, but rather He assumed human nature within a hypostasis opened wide to the whole of humanity. Thus He has become the only effective priest, remaining also God, in whom He—as priest and hence as man—gathers men effectively together into one. Only thus can He give eternal life back to human beings, as life in God. He remains thus a Priest forever, the only complete Priest, the only man in whom we have entry before, and the possibility of being seated beside, the Father. And because after His Ascension He cannot be physically seen, Christ, as the unique and perfect Priest, is the source of the entire visible priesthood.

The Triune God entrusted Christ with this mission as the only complete Priest, and Christ also gave it to Himself as God, not as man, because as man He received it. "Emmanuel has therefore become High Priest for us; through Him we are being offered to God

the Father, and we have been renewed in accord with what we were in the beginning."[1] As High Priest He offers us in Himself as a righteous gift or a sacrifice well pleasing to God. For first He offers our humanity, which He assumed in a pure way. But by uniting Himself with us, He purifies us and offers us too as a pure gift to God. "When Christ became our High Priest and through Him we were offered intelligibly [not sensibly] in a sweet-smelling fragrance to God and the Father then we were deemed worthy of His benevolence, and we have the sure pledge that death will no longer have any dominion over us."[2] Death will no longer have dominion because, by offering us to God as pure sacrifices He fills us with His Godhead. And in the close union realized between us and God, we have the fountain of permanent and everlasting life.

Just as Aaron and Melchizedek—themselves anticipated types of Christ as High Priest—did not take the priesthood from within themselves, neither did Christ take the priesthood from Himself. Only the man sanctified by God can enter before God. The one who is not consecrated cannot enter before God, because such a one cannot sanctify himself. Christ as man was sanctified by God inasmuch as He became a pure man through the initiative of the Word of God and through the working of the Holy Spirit, by the will of the Father.

> It is necessary for us to know that the Son Himself, the Word of God the Father, cannot be said to have been a Priest as Officiator if it was not understood that He became like us. And as He was called *Apostle* [Heb 3:1] and *Prophet* [Luke 7:16] on account of His humanity, so was He also called *Priest* [Heb 5:6]. For He needed the image of service in order to perform the works of service, that is, the *kenosis*. For He who is in the image of the Father and equal with Him, He before whom stand the Seraphim and whom a multitude of angels serve, humbled Himself, and because of this it is said that He is also the Officiator of the mysteries and of the true tabernacle. It is then that He who is above all creation was also sanctified together with us . . . Therefore, of Him who sanctifies Himself as God, when He became man, made His abode among us, and became our brother as regards humanity it is said that He sanctifies Himself together with us. Thus the need to serve as priest and to be sanctified together with us pertains to the economy of the Incarnation.[3]

C. Priesthood and the Unity of the Church

Just as the Son of God has come in the flesh to open up for us in Himself entry before the Father and is thus the only man in whom we are united with the Father and among ourselves, in the same way Christ makes use of men in the flesh and of one of these for each community of believers in order to keep us in union with Himself. But this man must partake in Christ's holiness so that Christ's holiness can extend itself through Him as a unifying power. The faithful must have in this man, taken from among them as Christ's human nature was taken from us, an instrument chosen from on high as a means of unifying them with Christ, whom he represents. Christ Himself works through priests, as the only Priest in the strict sense, for the visible and invisible unification of human beings in Himself. Having Christ the only Priest working through them, all priests are visible instruments of His unique priesthood. Christ has not taken humanity by the hand in vain; but because He no longer works visibly through His own hand, His hand is active through the hand of those through whom His invisible priesthood is extended into the visible plane. In the same way, because He no longer speaks His words visibly through His own mouth, He speaks them invisibly through the mouth of the visible instruments of His priesthood. He works through the hand of these as they perform all the sanctifying gestures and pronounce all the words and prayers of Him and to Him with the consciousness of serving Him, or of serving the Father with Him and through Him. The human body is important not only when the mysteries are received through it but also when they are celebrated, because the Spirit, coming forth from the body of Christ, is active through the human body.

The consecration or ordination of these men is precisely the act through which Christ, in a visible form, chooses and invests these men as the instruments through whom, when they celebrate the sacramental actions, He Himself will celebrate them invisibly; when they teach and pastor in His name, He Himself will teach and pastor through them. But through this act of consecration, they are not only enabled for this purpose, they are also laid under obligation. This means that they are invested with a "charism" or a "gift" so that they can officiate these works with seriousness, responsibility, and as an obligation, so that what they officiate Jesus Christ may officiate through them.

Priests are not only visible yet independent images of Christ as Priest but also the visible instruments of His invisible priesthood. The teaching that they communicate is not theirs; through their hand they are not communicating their own blessings and graces but those of Christ. Hence they have no reason to be proud of themselves. However, their hand and their mouth are not set in motion against their will but precisely through their will to make themselves servants of Christ. They are not passive instruments of Christ. Hence they too become worthy of honor. But the more completely they put themselves at the disposal of Christ's working through them, the more they are worthy of an even greater honor. In their greatest zeal their humility becomes apparent, and vice versa; that is, they are conscious that the power belongs not to them but to Christ. Hence if Christ as High Priest is a servant, how much more are priests servants of the redemptive service of Christ. They give nothing from within themselves except service. If they do not render this service with their whole heart, not only do they not fulfill the saving work of Christ as they should, but to a great degree they impede its fulfillment.

But Christ exercises His work as unique and unifying Priest not only through the fact that in each community His priesthood is exercised through a single instrument, but also through the fact that these instruments are themselves also gathered into unity, into their unique visible center. This is the bishop.

The bishop is the full representative of Christ, the unique and unifying high priest. Each bishop is the head of a local Church, the "head of the fullness of Christ."[4] For Christ invests him not only with the charism and the responsibility of the celebrating of the mysteries, which are also celebrated by the priest, but with the mystery of ordination as well, so that all the priests should have their priesthood through him and stand in obedience to him. If through consecration Christ makes a priest His visible instrument and image in the celebration of the other mysteries, He makes the bishop His visible instrument and image in the consecration of the visible instruments through whom He celebrates the other sacraments.

For this reason the bishop is *par excellence* the visible representative of Christ and works "according to the will of God in Christ."[5] Hence because the Church exists invisibly in Christ, it exists visibly in the bishop, Christ's plenary instrument: "*episcopus in Ecclesia et*

Ecclesia in episcopo."[6] "Without the bishop there can be no Church,"[7] for, without him, Christ has no visible instrument or image through whom He can ordain those who are to be the visible instruments in the celebration of the remaining sacraments, through which He adds new members to the Church and supports the life of the Church, His mystical body, in unity. Without the bishop there is no instrument through whom to consecrate the personal instruments of all the mysteries. Thus, "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic [Universal] Church. It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptize or to celebrate a love-feast [that is, the Eucharist] . . . Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist, which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it . . . But that which seems good to him [the bishop], is also well-pleasing to God."[8] "The bishop is the representative of the Father."[9] He takes the place of Christ visibly as teacher, priest, and pastor.[10]

In a summary of the opinions of the earlier Fathers of the Church on the bishop's role, Dositheus of Jerusalem says,

> The dignity of the Bishop is so necessary in the Church, that without him, neither Church nor Christian could either be or be spoken of. For he, as a successor of the Apostles . . . is a living image of God upon the earth . . . And he is, we suppose, as necessary to the Church as breath is to man, or the sun to the world . . . "What God is in the heavenly Church of the first-born [Heb 12:23], and the sun in the world, that every High Priest is in his own particular Church . . ."[11]
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> The High Priest is also . . . the fountain of the Divine Mysteries and graces, through the Holy Spirit, and he alone consecrates the Holy Myron. And the ordinations of all orders and degrees in the Church are proper to him; and in a primary and highest sense he binds and looses . . . And he preaches the Sacred Gospel, and contends for the Orthodox faith.[12]

But this does not remove the bishop from the category of those who serve. The power exercised through him does not belong to him but to Christ. He more than anyone else must be overwhelmed by the fact that, although he is himself a mortal man like anyone else—or even weaker than many others—it is through him that the most complete

saving activity of Christ is performed. He should feel overwhelmed by the responsibility for the Church that weighs upon his shoulders but at the same time he must be conscious that the more he curbs his pride and the more he puts himself at Christ's disposal, the more this responsibility is fulfilled in him, lest he think that the Church depends on him. He must aspire to humbly identify his will all the more with the will of Christ, instead of pressing Christ into the service of his own pretensions to power. He will be all the more effective in his activity the more he contributes to making Christ more visible and more praised.

Bishops are also maintained in a spirit of humility because not one of them is independent or a master over the others, but each exists within the framework of the communion of all the bishops. Thus all of them together maintain unified the teaching of Christ and the liturgical and canonical order of the Church, which is the only Church through which Christ works and hence the only one through which the salvation of mankind is achieved. The bishops must obey Christ, but Christ is in the Church and has established that salvation may be worked out through her sacraments and that He may be made known as such through the teaching that the Church preserves unchanged—the teaching that the bishops together preserve, along with all the Church. The bishops meet in the one Christ through the communion among themselves, but also in their humble connection with the whole Church, the body of Christ, guarding themselves against the temptation to make of the communion among themselves a kind of separate body that defends its own worldly privileges. *Just as the primacy of a single person is a fallacy, so the primacy of a limited body of persons is just as much a fallacy*, if understood in this same spirit.

The episcopal communion, which can be seen in a more pronounced fashion in the episcopal synods of the local Churches and in their intercommunion, or—in exceptional cases—in an Ecumenical Council, inherits the spirit of the apostolic communion, which is consummated in a reciprocal way with humility. For the task of understanding Christ and of correctly proclaiming Him and of guiding the people of God toward salvation is so heavy that no individual would dare to fulfill it without the common counsel of the others.

Thus the unity represented by the priest as the center of the parish and by the bishop as the center of the eparchy does not become a single-handed effort but exists within the framework of the whole

Church. In the same way, the apostles, through the communion among themselves and through the greatness of their responsibility for the Church, were brought within the framework of the one Christ, who is the single and unique center of genuine effectiveness in matters of salvation; neither is Christ a solitary being but one of the Trinity.

> Peter asks one question [John 13:6], Philip another [John 14:8], Judas another [John 14:22], Thomas another [John 14:5], and someone else yet another; they do not all ask the same question, nor does one person ask them all, but each has a turn, one by one . . . Philip wants to say something but is too shy to do it on his own and enlists Andrew's help [John 12:22]. Peter wishes to ask a question but beckons to John and has him pose it instead [John 13:24]. Where is the insistence on rank here? The ambition to be first? What better way could there be for them to show that they were disciples of Christ, *the gentle and lowly in heart* [Matt 11:29], the servant for the sake of us, his servants, who ascribes to the Father all glory in all things that he might provide us with a model of humble orderly behavior?[13]

D. The Institution of the Priesthood; The Three Ranks of Priesthood from the Beginning of the Church

We have started out from priests as centers of the parochial units and risen to the bishops as centers of the local ecclesial units, and then further to the communion of the episcopacy in the synod, which is the visible center of the entire Church—and one and all are united in Christ. We began from the priests as the most concrete centers of the believing people. But the foundation of the unity of the Church was established historically from above, moving downward, and in fact the unity of the Church as a whole is preserved from above to below.

The initial foundation of the unity of the Church is Christ, the High Priest *par excellence* consecrated directly by God the Father through the Holy Spirit. Christ remains forever the foundation of the Church's unity, but not apart from visible instruments united among themselves and with Him—the unique High Priest *par excellence*. He has chosen the twelve disciples—the ones sent by Him, His apostles—just as He is the "one sent," or the "apostle," of the Father (Heb 3:1).

Through the apostles Christ gives a wider visible foundation to His Church for the time when He will have passed to an invisible plane. This foundation is wider because the Church too will spread out from the group of those who believed in Christ at the beginning and who prefigure the Church. But this foundation will remain a unitary one through the communion of the apostles in Christ, who remains with them. So that the visible unity of the Church might not find its ultimate center in the visible plane but in Christ, *Christ does not leave a single apostle or any successor of His as the center of the Church, but a community of apostles and bishops*, so that they may be conscious that their ultimate unity and that of the Church is in Christ, that He alone is the unique High Priest, and that He too is within the Trinity. All the bishops must transcend themselves within their higher unity in Christ.

Through the sending of Christ, and then through the election and consecration of the twelve apostles at Pentecost, the mystery of ordination is instituted. But the Savior indicates the content of the mission of those thus chosen and ordained, and of their successors, on all those occasions when He commands them and gives them the power to baptize, to forgive sins, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to utter in the light what they have heard from Him whispered in their ear (cf. Matt 10:27) and what they have seen when they have been with Him; finally, He urges them to observe all that He has commanded them (cf. Matt 28:20). Even in the definition that Christ gives of the different powers and activities of the apostles and their successors, we have another proof of their institution as bishops and priests. In John 20:22 Jesus transmits to the apostles and their successors the episcopal or sacerdotal power of forgiving sins through the act of breathing the Holy Spirit upon them, which is a pledge of ordination that will be given to them completely at Pentecost.

Inasmuch as Christ gave them His teaching the entire time He was with them and His deeds likewise filled up this same period, it can be said that through all His teaching and activity Jesus has indicated the content of their mission as visible instruments of His ongoing activity. For because He has sent them to teach and to celebrate the sacraments, He has assured them that He will be with them until the end of the age (Matt 28:20); that "he who receives you receives Me" (Matt 10:40); and that "it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matt 10:20). In this way He has shown that they

are subjects through whom He Himself, as subject and source, communicates His own teaching and graces in the mysteries: He Himself is the High Priest, the Teacher, and the Pastor in them. Through all His teaching and saving activity, which was entrusted to the apostles and their successors in order to be offered and continued visibly, Christ has given content to the service to which the apostles and their successors have been called.

The apostles, following the example and commandments of the Savior and on the basis of His assurance that He would be with those who teach, baptize, and exhort until the end of the world, transmitted to their successors the mission given to them by the Savior. They did this through prayer and through the laying on of hands upon those called to the dignity of being their followers (Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6). In the beginning, the name of "priests" (that is, "presbyters") and "bishops" was given to all those whom the apostles ordained as their successors (Acts 20:17, 28). As long as the Christian communities were small, far apart from one another, and largely found in cities, it may have been the case that these successors to the apostles were usually bishops in the strict sense and included within their ministry the quality of being priests. But as the Christian communities began to grow and spread to the villages, these bishops appear to have been endowed with the power to ordain priests as their helpers (Titus 1:5) and to supervise the activity of these priests (1 Tim 5:19).

As followers who hold the fullness of the apostolic grace, the bishops are not, however, equal in every respect to the apostles. The apostles possessed something that they were not able to transmit. This something belonged only to the twelve apostles: the fact of having accompanied Christ through the duration of His activity; and that of having been witnesses that this same Christ, whom they knew in an exact and complete way, has risen from the dead. Only those who accompanied Christ throughout His ministry have been able to truly witness that He has risen, or that the one who rose from the dead is Christ Himself, whom they saw after His Resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). As unique witnesses of His Resurrection, as those with full knowledge of Jesus, and thus as foundations of the faith of the Church (Eph 2:20), it was of great importance that they went everywhere to give this testimony and to communicate their knowledge about Him; it was also important that many of them go to the same places, that the witness

of one might strengthen the testimony of another. As such, they were not bishops permanently located within a certain spot, although they had in themselves the fullness of grace. Precisely in order to give to the Churches founded by them permanent pastors so that they would be able to make the Churches in different locations grow and to maintain them, the apostles ordained bishops for such locations. When we say that the twelve apostles (those who accompanied Christ throughout His ministry and who saw Him risen) have been the witnesses *par excellence* of His Resurrection, we are not excluding the fact that besides them there were also other important witnesses; such persons were found especially among those who spent much time around Jesus but who were not, however, with Him all the time and hence did not know Him fully (1 Cor 15:6; Luke 10:1). This is why all faith in Christ has its ultimate basis in the apostles.

From the beginning the bishops have been able to be called priests as well, because in the grace of the episcopacy there is truly included that of the priesthood, and not vice versa. In this sense Peter, as bishop, also speaks of himself as a "fellow elder" (1 Pet 5:1), as does John (3 John 1:1).

Besides the bishops and priests established already by the apostles, the latter also established the first deacons through the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6). Their rank has continued ever since the time of the apostles (1 Tim 3:8–13).

Following the apostolic tradition, to the present day the Orthodox Church has preserved the three ranks of the hierarchy in the Church, as stages of a single special grace for each of them. In order to obtain the grace of a higher rank from among these, the grace of the lower rank must be obtained beforehand. The other ranks that have appeared in the course of time are not matters of "divine right," that is, they do not have a special grace. They are ranks of *cheirothesia* ("imposition of hands") rather than *cheirotonia* ("laying on of hands") and have only an administrative significance.

In any case, from the beginning of the Church the presbyters were not understood to be elders in the sense of men of advanced age. They also were not understood to have been chosen by the community without a special grace, as the Protestant tradition understands this, for they served as pastors of the other believers and received the Holy Spirit from the apostles, not from the community

(Acts 14:23; 2 Tim 1:6; Titus 1:5). Moreover, the Greek language has a separate word for "elder" (*geron*) when it wants to convey the notion of advanced age.

In celebrating the sacraments, the presbyter/priest in fact prays on behalf of the faithful, and it is in their names that he offers the bloodless sacrifice. He consecrates the holy gifts, performs all the sacraments, and does everything in the name of Christ (*in persona Christi*), being empowered by Him whose servant and representative he is, however unworthy. Inasmuch as Christ, as the true and unique Shepherd, chooses the priests as His instruments for the performance of the sacraments—transmitting to them grace and the power from the Father so that they may become priests, teachers, and shepherds and may exercise these three orders of Christ—the priests receive the priestly grace and power from Christ, not from the faithful, for the latter cannot procure for the priests a power that they do not have. "And we now have received a word of embassy, and we are come from God, for this is the dignity of the episcopate."[14]

St. Paul said the following to the "presbyters of the Church" (Acts 20:17) whom he had called to be with him at Miletus: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). They were not pastors on the basis of a delegation from the faithful but on the basis of the power of the Spirit, received from the apostles (2 Tim 1:14; 2:1–2; 1 Tim 5–6).

E. The Spiritual Character of the Christian Liturgical Priesthood and the Priesthood of the Faithful

It is true that in the New Testament the believers who were ordained by the apostles, and later by the bishops, to the rank of presbyters are not called "sacrificers" or "priests" (ιερείς) as those of the Old Testament are called. This name was given to them only later. Based on this, Protestant Christians draw the conclusion that they were not, strictly speaking, priests (ιερείς) because any sacrifice of the kind that was linked to the service of a priest came to an end in Christ. In order to give a foundation to their refusal of priesthood, Protestants have found themselves forced to dispute the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. But St. Paul declares that Christians too have an "altar" upon which

they offer sacrifice (1 Cor 9:13: θυσιαστήριον). He considers the body and blood of the Lord as such a sacrifice, which he sets against the animal sacrifices and also against the food and drink offered to the idols: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons" (1 Cor 10:20–21).

At the beginning, Christians called these celebrants "presbyters" and not "sacrificers" (ιερείς) because this latter name was too closely linked with the idea of offering blood sacrifices of animals. Through this new name, Christians wanted to distinguish the servants of Christ from Judaic worship.

Compared to Jewish and pagan animal sacrifices, the sacrifice of Christ was ultimately a spiritual sacrifice (a voluntary self-offering). Because it was a spiritual and permanent offering of the Person of the risen Christ, those through whom this offering is visibly celebrated must themselves also offer it spiritually. For Christ continually offers Himself to this end so that these men too can be added to it as a sacrifice like His, and indeed, not only they but all the faithful. This *offering* consists in their dedication to God in a spiritual way, to the praise of God through words and deeds. But their sacrifice of praise through words and deeds can take place only if the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord is continuous and if we partake of it. Both are mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat . . . Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:10, 15–16).

In order to actualize the sacrifice of Christ for the various communities, the only one through which Christians too are able to offer a sacrifice of praise, priests are necessary. But these priests must also perform their own spiritual offering together with that of Christ, and together with the faithful. The sacrifice of Christ does not work magically, because it does not produce its effect merely through the blood poured out formerly, like the blood of the sacrificial animals; rather, it works through the spotless blood of Christ—that is, His blood full of

the power of the Spirit—which also fills those who partake of Christ with that same power to offer themselves to God.

Because they have in common with the faithful their spiritual offering from the power of Christ's sacrifice, *Christian celebrants are no longer separated from the faithful in the way in which the priests of the old law, or the pagan priests, were.* This is another reason why at the beginning of the Church Christians avoided calling these men by the name of "priests," as had been done in the Old Testament and in paganism.

All Christians in this sense are a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9). However, the sacrifices of Christians, or they themselves as sacrifices, must be joined to that of Christ. For only through Christ as sacrifice can they too enter before the Father as a sacrifice. An initiative is necessary on their part, for if they were made to be sacrifices by force, they could not be sanctified in their inner beings, just as neither the pagans nor the Hebrews were sanctified in this way. But someone must represent Christ, who offers Himself as a sacrifice on behalf of all; this person receives the particular sacrifices of the faithful in unity with the sacrifice of Christ and in the unity of the faithful among themselves, so that the Church's sacrifice in Christ may be realized. This someone is the priest of the New Testament. He receives the sacrifices and prayers of all and unites them with the sacrifice of Christ, which he offers in the name of all and for the sake of all. He brings the sacrifices and prayers of all within the framework of the sacrifice and prayer of the Church as a whole. The liturgical priests do not offer only their own personal sacrifices and prayers but those of the entire community and of all the faithful joined to the sacrifice of Christ. In the priest the unification of all is realized, as in the visible image of Christ, who offers Himself invisibly through the priest as a sacrifice.

Thus the priest of the New Testament is distinguished from the Old Testament priests and the pagan priests, who were mere offerers of animal sacrifices. He is also distinguished from them by the fact that, in accord with the preponderant importance that he possesses as the unifying spiritual factor, his mission also involves the preaching of the word and the pastoral care of the faithful in order to advance their spiritual formation; he must make use of these as a means of maintaining the unity of the faithful in Christ and in the Church, and

as a means of bringing them more and more into conformity with the image of Christ.

These same ministries were also exercised by Christ as High Priest. These ministries of the priest also contribute to the imprinting of Christ upon the very being of the faithful. The faithful also realize in this manner their universal priesthood with the help of the liturgical priesthood, not only as those who offer their own personal sacrifices but also in the dominion they manifest over their passions and in their role as teachers within their families and societies; they sanctify themselves through all these ministries and contribute to the sanctification of the world, even though they do not do this as certified representatives of the Church.

In the prayer that precedes chrismation, the priest asks that the one who is to be chrismated may be "pleasing [to God] in every word and deed" and that his soul be preserved "in purity and uprightness."[15] This signifies "the consecration, the complete placing of one's entire life in the ministry of the royal priesthood . . . Laymen do not have access to the means of grace (the power of celebrating the sacraments); on the other hand, their sphere is 'the life of grace,' its penetration into the world. This is the 'cosmic liturgy' in the world, already at work by the simple presence of 'sanctified beings,' of 'Trinitarian dwellings,'"[16] as those who are to be chrismated are called in the prayer that the bishops say to consecrate the chrism. In the second or third century, Minucius Felix declares, "He who snatches man from danger slaughters the most acceptable victim. These are our sacrifices, these are our rites of God's worship."[17] And Origen says,

> All those who have received the anointing are priests . . . each one carries his sacrifice within himself, and he himself puts the fire on the altar so that he becomes a continual sacrifice. If I renounce everything I own, if I carry my cross and follow Christ, I have made an offering on God's altar . . . If I love my brothers even to give my life for them, if I fight for truth and justice even to death, if I mortify myself . . . if the world is crucified to me and I to the world, I have offered a sacrifice on God's altar and I become the priest of my own sacrifice.[18]

In general, the believer, as a member of the royal priesthood who takes power from the sacrifice that the priest offers during the celebration of the Liturgy, "continues this act *extra muros*; he celebrates the

Liturgy through his everyday life . . . His presence in the world is like a continuation of the *epiclesis*, an invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the day ahead, upon the work and the fruits of the earth."[19]

The act of proceeding in a circle around the *analogion* that the priest performs with the child after his baptism and chrismation has the same significance. Whereas the candidate for priesthood proceeds in a circle around the holy table, showing his resolve to offer Christ as a sacrifice throughout the course of his life for the good of the faithful, as well as his resolve to celebrate the mysteries and to teach in the Church, the layman, or member of the universal priesthood, is dedicated to the ceaseless service of Christ outside the altar, in the world, through other means than those of the celebration of the mysteries· still, the layman also seeks to keep the world, as well as himself, in a circle around Christ.

If the priest is called to shape the faithful in the offering of these sorts of sacrifices and in dedicating their whole lives in this way to Christ, himself going before them as an example, we can say that the priesthood of the New Testament is the fulfillment of the incomplete priesthood of the Old Testament and of the pagan religions. In that incomplete priesthood, there was expressed, mostly through external acts, the hope for a genuine consecration of the world through true sacrifices, nourished from the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

But because the priests' ministry of teaching and pastoral care in fact contributes to the development of the universal priesthood of the faithful, to the maintenance of their unity in Christ (or their unity in the Church), and to the configuration of all according to the same unitary and authentic image of Christ, it must be exercised likewise in a unitary manner. In order to assure this unity of teaching, of sacramental celebration, and of pastoral care (or the formation of the faithful according to the image of Christ and their living out their own lives according to this image), it is necessary that the priests have a superior center invested with power from on high to preserve unchanged this teaching, celebration, and leading of the faithful, in conformity with the apostolic regulation of the Church. This higher center is the bishop. The Church has assured the dependence of priests upon the bishop in the first place by their ordination at the hands of the bishop. Through ordination priests receive the grace that signifies the right and power to celebrate the sacraments, to proclaim the teaching, and

to administer pastoral care. Dependence on the bishop ensures the fulfillment of these services in the same manner throughout the whole eparchy, after the bishop has assured himself that those receiving ordination have acquired the capacity to carry out these activities in the proper manner.

The bishop of an eparchy, in his turn, must stand within a communion of the bishops of other eparchies so that the unity of teaching, of sacramental celebration, and of living out the gospel that he ensures in his own eparchy will be in harmony with the teaching, the sacramental celebration, and the apostolic living in the universal Church.

In order to ensure this unity, from the time of the apostles it was already established that every new bishop was to be ordained by three, or at least by two, other bishops and that before the ordination the candidate make a comprehensive confession of his faith, proving that it is the same faith as that of the bishops who are ordaining him in the name of the entire episcopacy of an autocephalous Church, which is in communion with the whole episcopal body of the universal Church. Thus he gives the assurance that he will take care that in his eparchy and under his guidance and teaching, the teaching of the Church of every time and place will be proclaimed, the same mysteries celebrated, and the life of the faithful directed according to the same evangelical norms as at the beginning of the Church. This detailed confession of faith is not required of the priest or deacon but only of the one who is to receive the grace of the high priesthood, so that he may guarantee the preservation of the teaching, of the established order of the sacraments, and of the canonical matters in the Church entrusted to his pastoral care.

F. Apostolic Succession

The transmission of this same grace from bishops to bishops, beginning from the apostles, together with the transmission of the power and the obligation of preserving the same teaching and the same sacramental and pastoral norms, is called the apostolic succession. According to the measure of their more limited ministries, all the priests of a given eparchy receive, through the bishop of the eparchy, this same grace that comes from the apostles; along with it they receive the power and the obligation to preach the same teaching and to preserve

the same order in the celebration of the mysteries and in the pastoral care of souls along paths that are in harmony with the tradition that came down from the apostles. The Church thus always lives spiritually by the same apostolic grace, and by the same teaching and sacramental and evangelical practice of the apostles.

The bishops are the branches that, growing out from the same apostolic trunk, extend the grace and content of the apostolic life into all the smaller branches, represented by the priests; and into all the leaves and fruits, represented by the faithful.[20] Better said, the same sap—that is, Christ—spreads through the bishops and priests into the whole tree of the Church and is found directly in each of her members. Without the grace of the apostolic succession of the hierarchy and without the apostolic teaching transmitted together with it, there would be no baptized Christians; there would be no communion with Christ in the Eucharist; and there would be no knowledge of Christ in His activity in Christians, of how He has been present and exercised His activity in the whole of the past.

The interior factor of this succession is Christ Himself and His Holy Spirit, but the visible factor is the whole Church in her expansion throughout time and space, under the pastoral care of the bishops. John Karmiris says,

> It is necessary to add that the apostolic succession is not limited only to the uninterrupted historical line of bishops or to the succession of the apostolic teaching (*successio doctrinae*), but that it is also extended to the apostolic succession of the sanctifying service and dignity, as well as to the continuous and uninterrupted line of the generations of Christians from all ages, to the apostolic succession of the entire Church. The Church, after the death of the apostles, was the general and principal bearer of apostolicity and of the apostolic service, considering that the Spirit of Pentecost was imparted not only to the twelve apostles but also to the whole of God's people of the new covenant and to the whole Church through the multitude of gifts successively transmitted . . . In this larger sense, it can be said that there is an apostolic succession of all the faithful baptized in the Church on the basis of their calling to preserve the confession of faith and the apostolic teaching through their various gifts by which the faithful participate to a certain degree in the threefold dig-

nity of Christ, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who works in the Church.[21]

Concerning the apostolic succession of the hierarchy, there is a great deal of evidence from the beginnings of the Church. Clement of Rome proclaims, for example, "The apostles have preached the Gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ [has done so] from God. Christ therefore was sent forth by God, and the apostles by Christ."[22] Then the apostles, "preaching through countries and cities . . . appointed the first-fruits [of their labors], having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe . . . And afterwards [the apostles] gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry."[23] According to Hippolytus of Rome, the bishops are "their [the apostles'] successors, and as participators in this grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching, as well as being reputed guardians of the Church."[24] And according to Eusebius of Caesarea, "The primates, the judges, and the councilors of the beautiful city [of the Church] have taken their mission from the apostles and disciples of the Savior, and from their succession, budding as if from a good seed, the leaders of Christ's Church even now shine forth."[25]

St. Irenaeus says that the apostles left bishops as successors in their places,[26] and indeed he affirms that the priests too "possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father."[27]

Through the apostolic succession of the episcopacy, the integral preservation of the apostolic teaching is ensured, that is, not only in its fixed form in the New Testament but also in its explicit form, which bears the name of holy tradition. This has been preserved through the apostolic succession in a form that is both oral and applied. "The truth was not delivered by means of written documents but *viva voce*," says St. Irenaeus.[28] And it is known that what is left in writing never covers all that is transmitted orally or by means of practical application. But the wealth of this oral and applied treasure cannot be appropriated from our predecessors except by those who have spent a long time with them. The apostolic succession of the hierarchy also implies time spent together by the young with the old, a practical discipleship.

The episcopal charism is the charism that bears in itself the power of transmitting all the graces and gifts that are diffused, beginning with the apostles, at all times in the Church; it is the power of transmitting Christ Himself and His Holy Spirit, present and active in these gifts and graces. If this is true, it need not be understood only as a channel that brings something ancient down to us but as a fire that is transmitted with the same power of warming; or it may be compared to the water of an always powerful river that penetrates into the new soil that it reaches and makes this soil fertile. The fire and the water of the graces have persisted in the Church from her very beginning. However, they do not come only from the past but also from above, in every age, for the Church is always open to heaven. They are the sun that gives warmth to persons in every generation, a sun whose rays are found in these persons but that penetrates them from above.

The Christ whom we receive today through the mysteries and through the teaching of priests ordained by bishops (and indeed through the teaching of our parents as well) we also feel present and alive in these persons, and thus He can penetrate into us too. He is not a Christ of the past except in the sense that He is the same Christ who has been living and active in all the previous generations as well. He is always alive. Through the apostolic succession, the eternal, living presence of Christ is ensured, the presence of the same Christ in an ongoing way in every generation. It is not Christ who passes into history but the generations of men. Yet all of these have been alive in Christ. And only in this same Christ are we too alive. But we receive the living Christ from those who live in Him, with whom we continue to live for a time in this living Christ. It is only that they have received Him a little before we have. The succession is likewise a continual concurrence.

The doctrine about Christ does not constitute the only content of the apostolic succession or of the tradition; in that case it would become a theoretical doctrine that could come to seem antiquated after a time. Nor does the grace of the mysteries, as the activity of Christ communicated to us, form the only content of tradition. In order for the activity of Christ to have its full effect within us, we must know in a broader way who He is and what it is that He asks of us. Only together do Christ's grace and teaching and the teaching about Christ transmit Him to us in His living and effective fullness.

Because Christ as God and as true man does not grow old neither do His activity and the teaching about Him grow old. But the depiction of His infinite Person—infinite through His Godhead, and always relevant through His humanity, which was realized in the highest way—must be made understandable at the level of understanding proper to each age, in order to make evident His unique truth in its fullness. Hence St John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nazianzus insisted on the importance of the teaching office of priests and bishops.

If the preservation and propagation of Christ's integral teaching belong to the ministry of the ordained ranks, the Orthodox Church cannot recognize as valid the ordinations of other Churches that have altered this teaching.

There can exist no succession of grace from the bishops who have fallen from this teaching to those whom they ordained. Otherwise we would fall into an understanding of grace as something magical; it would no longer be a spiritual force joined together with the true knowledge of God.

If the Orthodox Church recognizes the ordination of members of the Roman Catholic and ancient Oriental Churches, this is done on the basis of economy, in the case when these enter into the Orthodox Church and complete their faith, which had been damaged to some extent from the moment of their ordination. (The problem of those belonging to the hierarchy of the Old Catholic Churches would merit special consideration once the Orthodox Church had been assured that this Christian group had not fallen away from the integral teaching of the Church at all times.)

More difficult is the problem of the recognition of Anglican ordinations given the great variety and fluidity of the Anglican Communion not only in matters of teaching but also of the sacraments themselves. Because for some Anglicans the teaching about the sacraments has become diluted, not all think that the priesthood itself is necessary. For the time being, the Orthodox Church is waiting for progress on the part of the Anglican Communion toward greater unity and firmness in their doctrine, in a spirit of increased proximity to the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

Ordination makes those who possess it capable of transmitting the grace of the mysteries to other believers of the Church not because of the personal worthiness of these priests and bishops but in their qual-

ity as representatives of the Church and witnesses of her faith. This is one of the explanations for the Church's teaching that the mystery of ordination cannot be repeated, and that priests and bishops who have been defrocked or who have fallen into heresy can come back to be valid celebrants of the mysteries and have their canonical punishments lifted and their place at the bosom of the Church restored. The capacity to celebrate the sacraments validly with which they were invested became inactive when they left the environment of grace found within the Church, but it was not totally abolished in them.

This explanation must be completed, however, with another observation: that the mystery of ordination, like those of baptism and chrismation, places a man within a certain fundamental relationship with Christ. And in this the sacrament is distinct from the Eucharist and marriage, which strengthen this relationship on the conscious plane of consciousness; and from repentance and holy unction, which restore the relationship. This relationship is imprinted upon the being of the man and leaves in him certain traces, even without his willing them. This is in some way analogous to the mark left on the married couple by the relationship established between them through a lifelong marriage. Hence the mystery of marriage too is in general considered indissoluble, and the Church does not gladly approve of a second marriage, even less of a third.

G. The Visible Aspects of Ordination and the Invisible Power It Bestows

The celebrant of the mystery is the bishop of the eparchy or his delegate—who must be a bishop—in the case of the ordination of priests and deacons who will serve within the eparchy. In the case of the ordination of a bishop, three bishops, or at the very least two, who represent the episcopacy of the respective autocephalous Church are the celebrants. This maintains the unity of the priests in the eparchy, and of the faithful who receive the sacraments from them, within the one Christ represented by the bishop; it also maintains the unity of the bishops among themselves in the high priesthood received from the same Christ's high priesthood and from His Spirit, a high priesthood similar to that of the apostles.

stands a woman in prayer, an *orans*.[33] The man without the woman loses himself in abstraction; the woman keeps him connected to life, which has its basis in the divine life, in the Holy Spirit.

The roles cannot be mixed.

The bishop must be unmarried so that his service may consist not only in the personal celebration of the mysteries and in the personal instruction of Christians in matters of the faith but also in the supervision of these same services on the part of the priests as his helpers. His being must be wholly occupied with the care of the Church. Thus he is to forget any other interest of his own or of his family, in the likeness of Christ, whose full representative he is.

If through the other sacraments a foundation is laid for the new personal life, or this life is furthered, priestly and high priestly service is accorded to those who have this life already and have given proof of their authentic collaboration with the grace given for the strengthening of this life in their being.

The service of the three hierarchical ranks, or orders, is linked to the Liturgy because the obligation incumbent upon the members of these ranks consists principally in the celebration of the mysteries and the teaching of the people, and the culmination of the mysteries is the Eucharist, which is celebrated in the Holy Liturgy. Moreover, throughout the whole course of the Liturgy, instruction is given in a primary way.

No one can reach one of the higher ranks in the hierarchy without having passed through the lower ones, beginning with the lowest—that of the diaconate—nor can anyone be ordained within the same Liturgy from the lowest of these ranks to the highest rank. For if the rank of bishop were to be given at the beginning, the priesthood and diaconate would be confused with it and could no longer be bestowed in a special way; and if the diaconate were bestowed at the beginning of the Liturgy, then later the priesthood and then the episcopacy, the bishop would not be able to celebrate the whole Liturgy at once.

Hence the ordination of the deacon takes place after the transformation of the holy gifts so that it would make no sense for him to become a priest in the course of the same Liturgy, because he would no longer have the power to officiate at the transformation of the holy gifts, which is the essential point of the Holy Liturgy; nor would he be able to put into practice in the same Liturgy the principal office of

the deacon which is that of assisting the priest in giving Communion to the faithful. In the same way, the ordination of a priest takes place after the entry with the holy gifts in order to fulfill immediately at the same Liturgy the service of their transformation—the essential act of the Liturgy and of the priestly service within the Liturgy. But after that it would make no sense for him to be advanced to the rank of hierarch because he would no longer have anything to do, in that same Liturgy as hierarch. For the same reason, the bishop is ordained after the singing of the Trisagion so that he can supervise immediately at the same Liturgy the readings from the Epistle and the Gospel, which represent the teaching ministry that is so essential to the bishop, and then so that he can officiate at the transformation of the gifts.

The candidates for the two lower ranks are brought into the altar, that is, to the ministry of the sacrifice of Christ: the future deacon by two deacons, and the future priest by two priests. These lead the candidates around the holy table three times, and during each of these circlings the candidates kiss the four corners of the holy table and the hand of the ordaining hierarch, who is seated on a throne placed on the western side of the holy table. The candidates kiss his hand, his *omophorion*, and his *epigonation*, also making three prostrations before him. The future deacon is lead three times around the holy table by two deacons, which signifies the initiation of the future deacon into his diaconate and a certain acceptance of the new deacon into the order of their ranks. The conducting of the candidate for the priesthood by the two priests has an analogous meaning.

By circling three times around the holy table and kissing its corners, the future deacon and priest show that their concern and love will move without interruption throughout their entire lives around Christ, who is present invisibly on the holy table and visibly in the person of the bishop seated beside it.

Through the three prostrations made by each before the bishop and by kissing the *omophorion*, the *epigonation*, and his right hand, the candidates for the diaconate and the priesthood demonstrate their will to obey their bishop, who in a visible way represents Christ. The *omophorion* is the sign of his pastoral care for the people; the *epigonation* is the sign of his spiritual power; and his right hand is the instrument through which Christ Himself transmits His activity in the sacraments that the bishop celebrates.

According to the tradition of the Orthodox Church, only members of the Church who are of the male sex can be ordained, and these men make a confession of the Church's faith and witness that they will fulfill on behalf of the Church the duties pertaining to the hierarchical rank into which they are introduced. According to the resolution of the Quinisext Council,[29] only those who are unmarried or widowed through the death of their spouse and who have become priest-monks beforehand can be admitted to the rank of bishop. For priests and deacons, marriage is not permitted after ordination.[30] Some situations may be detrimental to the authority of the priest.

These conditions required of those who receive ordination have a spiritual significance. The members of the hierarchy can only be men because they are called to be the visible instruments of Christ, the unique and invisible celebrant of the mystery, and Christ was a man. Women give birth to male children and raise them to be priests in the likeness of the Mother of the Lord. They are the mothers of priests and bishops, and through them God exercises the highest spiritual authority over their children:

> The relation so mysterious between mother and child causes woman—Eve, the source of life—to watch over every being, to protect life and the world. The question of knowing whether the woman will be wife, mother, or bride of Christ (*sponsa Christi*) is only secondary. Her charism of interiorized and universal "maternity" carries every woman toward the hungry and the needy and admirably defines the feminine essence: virgin or spouse, every woman is a mother for all eternity (*in aeternum*). The structure of her soul predisposes her "to protect" all that crosses her path, to discover in the strongest and most virile being a weak, defenseless child.[31]

In her tranquility the woman has an assurance and a capacity to instill trust in the man, who, above and beyond any demonstration of power, feels the need to be supported by a mother. Jesus entrusts John the Apostle to His Holy Mother, as if she were John's own Mother: "Woman, behold your son!" (John 19:26). The bishops have their own mothers, who guide them with their intelligence and the strength of their faith. Thus it can be said that the support of woman is implied in the priesthood of the man.[32] In the catacombs of St. Callixtus, a man, a bishop, extends his hands over the Eucharistic bread, but behind him

The deacon then genuflects on his right knee before the holy table, placing his hands one upon the other and resting his head upon his hands. He shows in this way that he gives himself now as a living sacrifice to Christ, for Christ is always found upon the holy table as a sacrifice.

The hierarch then takes off his miter to show that it is not he as a man who will invest the candidate with the power of the diaconate but Christ Himself. He places his right hand on the head of the candidate, as the instrument (the "matter") through which the grace of Christ is transmitted, and says the words, "The divine grace, which always heals that which is infirm and fulfills that which is lacking, through the laying on of hands, elevates the devout subdeacon *N.* into deacon. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-Holy Spirit may come down upon him."[34] Although the grace of the diaconate is transmitted through the hand of the bishop, he declares humbly that it is the grace itself that elevates this man to the rank of the diaconate. But these words are only the introduction to the following prayer that follows and that is said by the bishop, who asks all those who are within the altar to join him in this prayer. In the celebration of the mystery, the bishop does not isolate himself but stands within the communion of the Church. In the first prayer he asks of Christ that He Himself "might bestow His grace" upon the one designated for the office of deacon. In a second prayer the hierarch asks of Christ that He Himself "fill the one who has been made worthy to enter the work of a deacon, by the visitation upon him of Your Holy and Life-Giving Spirit, with all faith, love, power, and holiness. For not through the laying on of my hands, but through the sending of Your many mercies, is grace bestowed on worthy ones."[35]

The consciousness that Christ Himself is present and active in this sacrament unites the celebrant of the mystery, in a profound fear and responsibility, first with those who assist at the sacrament and also with the one who receives it. In this encounter of souls penetrated by the awareness of the presence and working of the same Christ, the transmission of the power of Christ from those who have already been in His service to the new servant is achieved.

The new deacon is then invested with the symbols of the capacity for diaconal service by the hierarch, who hands to him the *orarion* and the cuffs in front of the royal doors after he has shown them to the

people and declared three times, "He is worthy!" To this the people respond each time with their own confirmation: "He is worthy!" Through their assent the faithful participate in this event of the consecration of a new servant of God and of the Church.

In the visible moments of the ordination of a priest, various differences are included, differences that emphasize what is distinct in the service of the priest. The candidate for the priesthood kneels down on both knees before the holy table, showing that he gives himself to Christ in a more pronounced manner. In the first prayer the bishop asks of Christ that He bestow the gift of "this great grace" of the priesthood, and in the second prayer the priest's ministries as celebrant of the mysteries and as preacher of the divine word are mentioned specifically: "That he may be worthy to stand blamelessly before Your altar, to proclaim the Gospel of Your Kingdom, to work with holiness at conveying the word of Your truth, to offer You gifts and spiritual sacrifices, and to renew Your people through the font of rebirth."[36]

Then facing the people, besides the vestments that symbolize his authority to be celebrant of the mysteries, the Book of the Liturgy (the *Liturgikon*) is also put into his hands; this book represents his principal service as celebrant of the Divine Liturgy. And after the transformation of the holy gifts, the bishop entrusts to him the sacred body of the Lord so that he may keep it in his right hand, with his left hand placed crosswise over it; at this point the bishop says these words: "Receive this Treasure and preserve it until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you will be held accountable for it."[37] Then the priest withdraws to the east side of the holy table, holding the sacred body in his hands, which are placed over the body and in some fashion identified with it. The priest will keep the body of the Lord sacrificed for the sake of the faithful until the end of the world. In this sense he is the representative of all the priests of the Church, and he is also a single priest who must make this body available to the faithful until the end of his own life, which for him coincides with the end of the world. For just as he lived his life until the end, so he will rise up before the Lord at the resurrection, or present himself after his death.

The bishop's responsibility to give the priest the body of the Lord and the priest's responsibility to receive it come together and are integrated within a common responsibility before Christ. This responsibil-

ity is also before the people, to whom the bishop must make available the body of Christ—that is, Christ Himself—for the duration of his whole life, so that it may be passed down to other bishops and priests until the end of the world. The eschatological opening up of the priesthood and of the Eucharist is especially prominent here. The priest, holding in his hands the body of the Lord, looks toward the life eternal, when the mystical body will be required of him.

In this unity realized through the common resonance of this deepest responsibility before Christ and before the Church in both her present form and her eschatological future, and in every step of the way up until that point—a responsibility to the Church that ends only in eternity—Christ procures for Himself through the mediation of the bishop a new visible instrument of His own, of His activity, in the mysteries that the priest will celebrate. In this common responsibility, the one who ordains and the one ordained become completely transparent to the activity of Christ Himself, because it is Christ Himself who works through His Spirit. "If the Holy Spirit did not exist, there would be no pastors and teachers in the Church. For these are established through the Spirit, as St. Paul also says: 'among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers' [Acts 20:28]."[38] "For this is the meaning of χειροτονία (i.e., "putting forth the hand") or ordination: the hand of the man is laid upon (the person) but the whole work is of God, and it is His hand that touches the head of the one ordained, if he be duly ordained."[39]

At the ordination of a bishop, it is not only the hand of one of the bishops that is laid upon the head of the candidate but also the book of the Holy Gospels. On one hand this indicates the principal task that the new bishop accepts, and on the other hand it underlines the belief that it is Christ Himself who is making this man a complete instrument of His own. In the first prayer, reference is made to the "yoke of the Gospel" that the new hierarch is accepting; in the second prayer, after his obligation to "offer sacrifice and oblations on behalf of all the people" is recalled, he is given the name of "steward of the episcopal grace." Thus he is placed in a special relationship with Christ, the true Pastor, so that he too may lay down his life for the faithful just as Christ has done, perfecting them through His example, His teaching, and the whole of His activity. "Make him an imitator of You, the true Shepherd, laying down his life for his sheep; make him a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, an instructor of the unwise, a teacher of

youth, a lamp to the world; so that when he has accomplished the work of perfecting the souls of those entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand without reproach before Your great judgment seat."[40]

After this, he receives vestments that are beyond those of the priesthood: the *sakkos*, the *omophorion*, and the miter. Keeping his priestly vestments and strengthening them further with the *sakkos*, the bishop will maintain in its complete form the sacerdotal ministry of celebrating the mysteries, never separating himself from the other spiritual and Eucharistic communities and from their believers, because he also possesses the rank of a priesthood with a wider unifying activity. By receiving the *omophorion* he assumes the pastoral responsibility for the whole community of the faithful in the likeness of Christ, who laid down His life for the salvation of each one among us, like the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep and goes in search of the one who is lost; this gives a spiritual significance to the bishop's royal power, symbolized by the miter. It is a spiritual power, a responsibility for the salvation of all the faithful.

As the instrument of Christ, the hierarch has a tremendous responsibility for the salvation of souls; he must imitate Christ in humility, as an example of purity, of disinterestedness, of kindness, of self-sacrifice. If he understands his role as representative of Christ as a basis for power in the worldly sense, he has separated himself interiorly from Christ, and through him the activity of Christ—who is kind, humble, pure, and in a state of continual self-sacrifice—is no longer accomplished in all its effectiveness. As an instrument of Christ, he must be a model servant of Christ and will have to give account at the judgment seat of Christ for the way he has fulfilled his ministry: if he has accomplished it well, he will have the greater reward; if he has accomplished it badly, he will receive the greater condemnation.