

21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: HOLY ORDERS

As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today

ca. 96 A.D.—Pope Saint Clement, fourth Bishop of Rome, disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, *Letter to the Corinthians*

—First written usage of “laity” to distinguish a member of the congregation from the clergy—
40:1-5 [W]e are bound to do in an orderly fashion all that the Master has bidden us to do at the proper times he set. He ordered sacrifices [i.e., the Eucharist] and services [i.e., the Liturgy] to be performed; and required this to be done, not in a careless and disorderly way, but at the times and seasons he fixed. Where he wants them performed, and by whom, he himself fixed by his supreme will, so that everything should be done in a holy way and with his approval, and should be acceptable to his will. Those, therefore, who make their offerings at the time set, win his approval and blessing. For they follow the Master's orders and do no wrong. The high priest is given his particular duties: the priests are assigned their special place, while on the Levites particular tasks are imposed. The layman is bound by the layman's code.

41:1-4 “Each of us,” brothers, “in his own rank” (1 Cor. 15:23) must win God's approval and have a clear conscience. We must not transgress the rules laid down for our ministry, but must perform it reverently. Not everywhere, brothers, are the different sacrifices—the daily ones, the freewill offerings, and those for sins and trespasses—offered, but only in Jerusalem. And even there sacrifices are not made at any point, but only in front of the sanctuary, at the altar, after the high priest and the ministers mentioned have inspected the offering for blemishes. Those, therefore, who act in any way at variance with his will, suffer the penalty of death. You see, brothers, the more knowledge we are given, the greater risks we run.

42:1-5 The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus, the Christ, was sent from God. thus Christ is from God and the apostles from Christ. In both instances the orderly procedure depends on God's will. And so the apostles, after receiving their orders and being fully convinced by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and assured by God's word, went out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit to preach the good news that God's Kingdom was about to come. They preached in country and city, and appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this any novelty, for Scripture had mentioned bishops and deacons long before. For this is what Scripture says somewhere: “I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith” (Isa. 60:17).

43:1-6 And is it any wonder that those Christians whom God had entrusted with such a duty should have appointed the officers mentioned? For the blessed Moses too, “who was a faithful servant in all God's house” (Num. 12:7; Heb. 3:5), recorded in the sacred books all the orders given to him, and the rest of the prophets followed in his train by testifying with him to his legislation. Now, when rivalry for the priesthood arose and the tribes started quarreling as to which of them should be honored with this glorious privilege, Moses bid the twelve tribal chiefs bring him rods, on each of which was written the name of one of the tribes. These he took and bound, sealing them with the rings of the tribal leaders; and he put them in the tent of testimony on God's table. Then he shut the tent and put seals on the keys just as he had on the rods. And he told them: “Brothers, the tribe whose rod puts forth buds is the one God has chosen for the priesthood and for his ministry.” Early the next morning he called all Israel together, six hundred thousand strong, and showed the seals to the tribal chiefs

and opened the tent of testimony and brought out the rods. And it was discovered that Aaron's rod had not only budded, but was actually bearing fruit. What do you think, dear friends? Did not Moses know in advance that this was going to happen? Why certainly. But he acted the way he did in order to forestall anarchy in Israel, and so that the name of the true and only God might be glorified. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

—*Inference of an all-male clergy*—

44:1-45:1 Now our apostles, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, knew that there was going to be strife over the title of bishop. It was for this reason and because they had been given an accurate knowledge of the future, that they appointed the officers we have mentioned. Furthermore, they later added a codicil to the effect that, should these die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. In the light of this, we view it as a breach of justice to remove from their ministry those who were appointed either by them [i.e., the apostles] or later on and with the whole church's consent, by others of the proper standing, and who, long enjoying everybody's approval, have ministered to Christ's flock faultlessly, humbly, quietly, and unassumingly. For we shall be guilty of no slight sin if we eject from the episcopate men who have offered the sacrifices with innocence and holiness. Happy, indeed, are those presbyters who have already passed on, and who ended a life of fruitfulness with their task complete. For they need not fear that anyone will remove them from their secure positions. But you, we observe, have removed a number of people, despite their good conduct, from a ministry they have fulfilled with honor and integrity. Your contention and rivalry, brothers, thus touches matters that bear on our salvation. ...

47:6 It is disgraceful, exceedingly disgraceful, and unworthy of your Christian upbringing, to have it reported that because of one or two individuals the solid and ancient Corinthian Church is in revolt against its presbyters (Cyril C. Richardson, *Christian Fathers*, pp. 62-64, 65).

—*ca. 100, Death of Saint John, the last of the Apostles*

ca. 107—Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, disciple of the Apostle John, *Letter to the Philadelphians*

9:1 Good, too, are the priests; but the high priest is better, to whom was entrusted the holy

of holies; and to him alone were entrusted the secret things of God.

ca. 107—Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Polycarp*—*Consecrated celibacy*—

5:1-2 Flee from base practices, but preach more against them: Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be content with their husbands in body and in soul. In like manner, exhort my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church (Eph. 5:25). If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him so remain without boasting. If he boast about it, he is lost; and if he be more esteemed than the bishop, he is ruined. ... It is proper for men and women who wish to marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, so that their marriage will be acceptable to the Lord, and not entered upon for the sake of lust. Let all things be done for the honor of God.

ca. 107—Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans*

8 Flee from schism as the source of mischief. You should all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father. Follow, too, the presbytery as you would the apostles; and respect the deacons as you would God's law. Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop's approval. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes [i.e., a presbyter]. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. ...

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Widows and Virgins)*—

13 Greetings to ... the virgins who are enrolled with the widows.

ca. 135—Saint Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, disciple of the Apostle John, *Letter to the Philippians*

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Widows)*—

4:3 [T]he widows should be discreet in their faith pledged to the Lord, praying unceasingly on behalf of all (1 Tim. 5:5; cf. 1 Thess. 5:17), refraining from all slander, gossip, false witness, love of money—in fact, from evil of any kind—knowing that they are God's altar, that everything is examined for blemishes (Clement, *Corin.* 41:2), and nothing escapes him whether of thoughts or sentiments, (*Corin.* 21:3) or any of "the secrets of the heart" (1 Cor. 14:25).

ca. 150—Saint Justin the Martyr, *First Apology*

66 The Apostles, in the Memoirs which they produced, which are called Gospels, have thus passed on that which was enjoined upon them: that Jesus took bread and, having given thanks, said, “Do this in remembrance of Me; this is My Body” (Luke 22:19). And in like manner, taking the cup, and having given thanks, He said, “This is My Blood” (Matt. 26:27-28, et al.). And He imparted this to them only. ...

67 On the day which is dedicated to the sun [i.e., Sunday], all those who live in the cities or who dwell in the countryside gather in a common meeting, and for as long as there is time the Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read. Then, when the reader has finished, the president verbally gives a warning and appeal for the imitation of these good examples.

Then we all rise together and offer prayers, and, as we said before, when our prayer is ended, bread is brought forward along with wine and water, and the president likewise gives thanks to the best of his ability, and the people call out their assent, saying the *Amen*. Then there is the distribution to each and the participation in the Eucharistic elements.

ca. 150—Hermas, brother of Pope Saint Pius, *The Shepherd*

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Widows)*—
Vis. 2:4:3 [*Hermas recounts that the old woman who is the Church came to him in a vision and said:*] “Therefore shall you write two little books and send one to [Pope Saint] Clement and one to Grapte [the head of the Order of Widows]. Clement shall then send it to the cities abroad, because that is his duty; Grapte shall instruct the widows and the orphans.”

ca. 177—Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians*
—*Orders: consecrated celibacy (Order of Virgins)*—

You would, indeed, find many among us, both men and women, who have grown to old age unmarried, in the hope of being closer to God. If, then, to remain virgins and eunuchs brings us closer to God, while to indulge in wrong thoughts and passions drives us from him, we have all the more reason to avoid those acts, the very thought of which we flee from. For we center our attention not on the skill of making speeches but on the proof and lessons of actions. We hold that a man should either remain as he is born or else marry only once. For a second marriage is a veiled adultery. The Scripture says, “Whoever puts away his wife

and marries another, commits adultery” (Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11).³ Thus a man is forbidden both to put her away whose virginity he has ended, and to marry again.

ca. 185—Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, disciple of Polycarp, *Against Heresies*

—*Ordination of women*—

1:13:2 Pretending to consecrate cups mixed with wine, and protracting to great length the word of invocation, [the heretic, Marcus,] contrives to give them a purple and reddish colour, so that Charis, who is one of those that are superior to all things, should be thought to drop her own blood into that cup through means of his own invocation ... Again, handing mixed cups to the women, he bids them consecrate these in his presence. When this has been done, he himself produces another cup of much larger size than that which the deluded woman has consecrated, and pouring from the smaller one consecrated by the woman into that which has been brought forward by himself, he at the same time pronounces these words: “May that Charis who is before all things and who transcends all knowledge and speech fill thine inner man, and multiply in thee her own knowledge, by sowing the grain of mustard seed in thee as in good soil.”

Repeating certain other like words, and thus goading on the wretched woman [to madness], he then appears a worker of wonders when the larger cup is seen to have been filled out of the small one, so as even to overflow by what has been obtained from it. By accomplishing several other similar things, he has completely deceived many, and drawn them away after him.

ca. 190—Saint Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, *Letter to Victor of Rome*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

Philip of the twelve Apostles, who sleeps in Hierapolis, and his two daughters who grew old in virginity, and his other daughter who regulated her life in the Holy Spirit and who rests in Ephesus. ...

Moreover, there is also John, who reclined at the bosom of the Lord (John 13:23), and who became a priest wearing the high priest’s mitre, and a witness and a teacher. ... Then there is also Polycarp in Smyrna, both bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, both bishop and martyr, from Eumenia ...

And what is to be said of Sagaris, bishop and martyr ...? and of Melito, the eunuch, who regulated his life entirely in the Holy Spirit, and

who sleeps at Sardes ... ? (Eusebius Pamphilus, *History of the Church* 5:24:2-5).

190-210—Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Who Is the Rich Man That Is Saved?*

42:2 After the death of the tyrant [Domitian], the [Apostle John] came back again to Ephesus from the Island of Patmos; and, upon being invited, he went even to the neighboring cities of the pagans, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole churches, and there to ordain to the clerical estate such as were designated by the Spirit.

ca. 200—Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics*

—*Ordination of women*—

41:4, 5-8 It is of no concern to [the heretics] how diverse be their views, so long as they conspire to erase the one truth. ... And the heretical women themselves, how shameless they are! They make bold to teach, to debate, to work exorcisms, to undertake cures, and perhaps even to baptize. Their ordinations are casual, capricious, and changeable. Now they put neophytes in office, and again, men who are attached to the world; and at another time, our apostates, so that they can hold them by glory when they cannot by truth. Nowhere is promotion easier than in the camp of the rebels, when merely to be there is service outstanding. So it is that today one man is bishop, tomorrow another; today, a deacon, and tomorrow a lector; today, a priest, who is tomorrow a layman. For even on laymen do they enjoin the functions of the priesthood.

ca. 205—Tertullian, *Baptism*

—*Ordination of women*—

But if those writings which are wrongly called *Acts of Paul* defend the example of Thecla as a license for women to teach and baptize, let them know that in Asia the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul's fame from his own, after having been convicted and having pleaded that he did it out of love for Paul, was removed from his office. For how could it seem credible that he who did not permit a woman even to learn in a formal manner, would grant to a female the power of teaching and baptizing? "Let them be silent," he says, "and at home consult their own husbands" (1 Cor. 14:34-35)!

ca. 206—Tertullian, *The Veiling of Virgins*

—*Ordination of women*—

9 It is not permitted to a *woman* to speak in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12); but neither (is it permitted her) to teach, nor to

baptize, nor to offer, nor to claim to herself a lot in any manly function, not to say (in any) sacerdotal office.

ca. 215—Saint Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop of Pontus, disciple of Irenaeus, *The Apostolic Tradition*

3:4 [The bishop consecrating a new bishop shall pray thus, saying:] "Father 'who knowest the hearts [of all]' (Acts 1:24) grant upon this Thy servant whom thou hast chosen for the episcopate to feed Thy holy flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2) and serve as Thine high priest, that he may minister night and day, that he may unceasingly [behold and] propitiate Thy countenance and offer to Thee the gifts of thy holy Church [i.e., the Eucharist],

3:5-6 "And that by the high priestly Spirit he may have authority 'to forgive sins' according to Thy command (John 20:23), 'to assign lots' according to the authority Thou gavest to the Apostles, and that he may please Thee in meekness and a pure heart, 'offering' to Thee 'a sweet-smelling savour,' through Thy Child Jesus Christ our Lord, through Whom to Thee be glory, might and praise, to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit now [and ever] and world without end. Amen."

4:1 And when he has been made bishop let every one offer him the kiss of peace saluting him, for he has been made worthy [of this].

4:2 To him then let the deacons bring the oblation [i.e., the Eucharist] and he with all the presbyters laying his hand on the oblation shall say giving thanks. ...

—*Ordination of women*—

11:4 Let the widow be instituted by word only and [then] let her be reckoned among the [enrolled] widows. But she shall not be ordained, because she does not offer the oblation nor has she a [liturgical] ministry.

11:5 But ordination is for the clergy on account of their [liturgical] ministry. But the widow is appointed for prayer, and this is [a function] of all [Christians].

ca. 215—Tertullian, *Monogamy*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

8:4 Peter alone [among the Apostles] do I find married, and through mention of his mother-in-law. I presume he was a monogamist; for the Church, built upon him, would for the future appoint to every degree of orders none but monogamists. As for the rest, since I do not find

them married, I must presume they were either eunuchs or continent.

ca. 217—Hippolytus, *Discourse on the End of the World*

41 Then He shall gather together all nations, as the holy Gospel so strikingly declares. ... Come, ye hierarchs, who did me sacred service blamelessly day and night, and made the oblation of my honourable body and blood daily.

ca. 245—Origen, disciple of Saint Clement of Alexandria, *Commentaries on Matthew*—*Consecrated celibacy*—

14:16 Certainly it is God who joins two in one, so that when He marries a woman to a man, there are no longer two. And since it is God who joins them, there is in this joining a grace for those who are joined by God. Paul knew this, and he said that just as holy celibacy was a grace, so also was marriage according to the Word of God a grace. He says, "I would that all men were like myself; but each has his own grace from God, one in this way, another in that (1 Cor. 7:7). ...

14:24 [J]ust as a woman is an adulteress, even though she seem to be married to a man, while a former husband yet lives, so also the man who seems to marry her who has been divorced does not marry her, but, according to the declaration of our Savior, he commits adultery with her.

ca. 250—Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, and his colleagues, *Letter to Pomponius, Bishop of Dionysiana*

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Virgins)*—
We have read you letter, dearest brother, which you sent by our brother Paconius, asking and desiring that we write back to you what we think ought to be done in regard to those virgins who, although they had once determined to continue firmly in their state of life, were afterwards discovered to have remained side by side in the same bed with men, one of whom you say is a deacon; and yet these same virgins who have confessed that they slept with men insist that they are virgins still. ...

Let no one think that she can defend herself with the excuse that whether or not she be a virgin may be examined and proved; for both the hands and the eyes of midwives are often deceived. Even if she be examined and be found to be a virgin intact in that part in which a woman can be examined, still she may have

sinned in another part of the body which can be corrupted but in which such an examination cannot be made.

Certainly the very lying together, the mutual embrace, the small talk and the kissing, and the disgraceful and foul sleep of the two lying together—how great a dishonor and crime does it confess! If a husband, coming upon his wife, should see her lying with another man, is he not filled with indignation and does he not fall into a rage? and in his jealous grief will he not perhaps take sword in hand? What then of Christ, our Lord and Judge, when He finds His virgin, who is dedicated to Him, lying with another man? How indignant and angry He is, and what penalties He does threaten against such lewd relations! ...

You have, therefore, acted advisedly and with vigor, dearest brother, in excommunicating the deacon who dallied often with a virgin, and the others, too, who were accustomed to sleep with virgins. But if they shall have separated themselves from each other, then let the virgins be carefully examined by midwives; and, if they shall have been found to be virgins, let them, when they have been received to communion, be admitted to the Church, with this warning, however: that if afterwards they should go back to the same men, or if they should dwell in the same house or under the same roof with them, they will be cast out with a more grave censure; nor will such persons be easily received back into the Church.

If, however, someone among them shall have been found to be corrupted, let her do full penance, because she that has committed this crime is an adulteress not against a husband but against Christ. Therefore, at a time considered a just interval after she has made a confession of sin, let her return to the Church. But if they continue in their obstinacy and will not separate themselves from each other, let them know that because of such shameless obstinacy we can never admit them to the Church, lest by their sins they might begin to set an example for the ruination of others. Do not let them imagine that the way of life and of salvation is still open to them, if they have refused to obey the bishops and the priests (4 [62]:1-4; Jurgens, vol. 1, pp. 226-227).

ca. 300—Council of Elvira, *Canons*

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Virgins)*—
13 Virgins, who have dedicated themselves to God, if they have lapsed from their covenant [*pactum*] of virginity and have been enslaved

to the same libidinous pleasure: if they do not understand what they have perpetuated [i.e., not grasped the gravity of their sin, and so are unwilling to do penance], it is determined that communion is not to be given to them even at death. But if they are once for all persuaded, or if the having been tainted was a lapse caused by the weakness of the flesh, let such women as these do penance all the rest of their lives, keeping themselves away from carnal intercourse, because they would rather be regarded as lapsed [i.e., a *lapsus* was a person who fell away from the faith during time of persecution]: it is determined that they may receive communion at death. ...

—*Inference of an all-male clergy*—

33 It is determined that bishops, presbyters [i.e., priests], and deacons, or all clerics stationed in the ministry, are to restrain themselves completely and are to keep themselves away from their wives and are not to beget children. Anyone who does beget children is to be expelled from the honor of the clerical state.

—313, *The Edict of Milan: legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

325—First Council of Nicaea, first ecumenical council, *Canons*

—*Consecrated celibacy; inference of an all-male clergy*—

1 If anyone has been castrated by surgeons operating on him during an illness, or by barbarians, he is to remain in the clerical estate; but if someone enjoying good health has castrated himself, this matter is to be investigated, and his belonging to the clerical estate is to be at an end, and in the future such persons must never be brought forward [for ordination]. But since it is clear that this applies to those who do such a thing intentionally and who dare to castrate themselves, it follows, then, in regard to those who have been made eunuchs by barbarians or by their masters, that the canon admits such men as these, be they found worthy, to the clerical estate. ...

3 The great council absolutely forbids a bishop, presbyter, deacon and any other cleric to have a woman living with him, except it be his mother, or sister, or aunt, or any person only on whom suspicion cannot fall. ...

18 It has come to the attention of the holy and great council that in some localities and cities deacons give the Eucharist to presbyters, although neither the canon nor the custom permits those who do not offer sacrifice to give

the Body of Christ to those who do offer the sacrifice. ...

—*Ordination of women: deaconesses*—

19 Similarly, in regard to the deaconesses, as with all who are enrolled in the register, the same procedure is to be observed. We have made mention of the deaconesses, who have been enrolled in this position, although, not having been in any way ordained, they are certainly to be numbered among the laity.

374-377—Saint Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia (Salamis), *Panárion or Panacea Against All Heresies*

—*Ordination of women*—

79:3 If God had so arranged things that the priesthood would be entrusted to women and that they would exercise a canonical role in the Church, first of all, before any other woman in the New Testament, he would have granted the priesthood to Mary, who was so honored that she carried the universal King in her womb.

375—Basil, *Second Canonical Letter to Amphilochius*

199:37 A man who marries after another man's wife has been taken away from him will be charged with adultery in the case of the first woman; but in the case of the second he will be guiltless.

ca. 375—Saint John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church, *To the Fallen Theodore*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

2:3 I do agree with you that marriage is legitimate. For it is written, "Marriage is honorable, and the marriage-bed is undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). But it is no longer possible for you to preserve the legitimate conditions of marriage. For if a person who has been joined to the heavenly Bridegroom afterwards deserts Him and joins himself to a woman, the act is adultery even if you call it marriage a myriad times over; or rather, it is as much worse than adultery as God is better than man. Do not be deceived by anyone's saying, "God has not forbidden marriage." I know that as well as you. He has not forbidden marriage; but He has forbidden adultery, which is what you are contemplating.

ca. 384—Saint Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona, *Three Epistles to the Novatianist Sympronian*

1:6 Certainly God never threatens the repentant; rather, He pardons the penitent. You

will say that it is God alone who can do this. True enough; but it is likewise true that He does it through His priests, who exercise His power. What else can it mean when He says to His Apostles: "Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven?" (Matt. 16:19; John 20:23). Why should He say this if He were not permitting men to bind and loose? Why, if He were permitting this to the Apostles alone [and not to their successors]? Were that the case, He would likewise be permitting them alone to baptize, them alone to Confer the Holy Spirit, them alone to cleanse the pagans of their sins; for all of these things are commissioned not to others but to the Apostles. But if the loosing of bonds and the power of the Sacrament is given to anyone in that place, either the whole is passed on to us from the form and power of the Apostles, or nothing of it can be imparted to us by whatever decrees. ... If, then, the power of both Baptism and Confirmation, greater by far than charisms, is passed on to the bishops, so too is the right of binding and loosing.

ca. 390—John Chrysostom, *The Priesthood*

—*Ordination of women*—

2:2 [W]hen one is required to preside over the Church, and to be entrusted with the care of so many souls, the whole female sex must retire before the magnitude of the task, and the majority of men also; and we must bring forward those who to a large extent surpass all others, and soar as much above them in excellence of spirit as Saul overtopped the whole Hebrew nation in bodily stature: or rather far more (Eph. 6:12).

392—Saint Jerome, Doctor of the Church,

Letter of Jerome to Pammachius

—*Consecrated celibacy; inference of an all-male clergy ("widowers")*—

48:21 [T]he Virgin Christ and the Virgin Mary have dedicated in themselves the principles of virginity for both sexes. The Apostles were either virgins or remained continent after their marriages. Those persons chosen to be bishops, presbyters, or deacons are either virgins or widowers; or certainly, having once received the priesthood, they remain forever chaste.

ca. 420—Saint Maximus, Bishop of Turin,

Sermon

—*Ordination of women*—

66:1 [I]t is good for a person to strive after the holiness of all of Quadragesima to an equal degree in order to fast without difficulty on a

particular day. These are not so much the commands of priests, however, as they are of God, and consequently the one who disdains them disdains not a priest but Christ, who speaks in His priest.

446—Pope Saint Leo the Great, 45th Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Letter to the Bishops of Mauretania*

12:2 "Do not impose hands hastily on anyone, and be not a partner in the sins of others" (1 Tim. 5:22). What does it mean to impose hands hastily, except to give the priestly honor to those who have not been tested, before the age of maturity, before the period of trial, before they have the merits of obedience, before they have experience of discipline? And what does it mean to be a partner in the sins of others, except that the one ordaining become like the one who did not deserve to be ordained?

452—Saint Patrick, first Bishop of Ireland, *A Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*

2 Even if the enemy reveals his true envy through the tyranny of Coroticus, who fears neither God nor the priests whom he has chosen and to whom he has given the highest divine power, namely that "those whom they bind on earth are bound in heaven" (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). ...

—*Consecrated celibacy (Order of Virgins)*—

3 Now I have lost count how many sons and daughters of the kings of the Scotti have become monks and virgins of Christ.

458—Leo the Great, *Letter to Rusticus, Bishop of Narbonne*

—*Consecrated celibacy; inference of an all-male clergy*—

167:4:3 The law of continence is the same for ministers [i.e., subdeacons and deacons] of the altar as it is for bishops and priests, who, when they were laymen or lectors, could lawfully marry and beget offspring. But when they reached the ministerial ranks what before was lawful ceased to be such. In order, therefore, that their marriages may become spiritual rather than carnal, it behooves them not to dismiss their wives, but to "have them as if they had them not" (1 Cor. 7:29); and in this way, while they retain the affection of their wives, their marital relations will cease.

591—Pope Saint Gregory the Great, 64th Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Letter to Peter, a Subdeacon in Sicily*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

1:42 Three years ago the subdeacons of all the churches of Sicily were forbidden, in accord with the practice of the Roman Church, all conjugal intercourse with their wives. To me it seems hard and improper that one who has not been accustomed to continence and who did not promise chastity beforehand should be compelled to be separated from his wife and thereby, perish the thought, perhaps fall into worse. Hence it seems to me that from the present day all bishops should be told not to presume to make anyone a subdeacon unless he has promised to live chastely. ... As for those who, since the prohibition, have been unwilling to abstain from intercourse with their wives, we desire that they shall not be advanced to a sacred order; for no one ought to approach the ministry of the altar except one who has proved himself in chastity before undertaking the ministry.

593—Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

4:12 *Gregory*: I must not forget to mention an account related to me by the Abbot Stephen, whom you know very well. He died in Rome not long ago. According to him there was in the province of Nursia a certain presbyter who ruled the church entrusted to him in great fear of the Lord. From the time when he received his ordination he loved his presbyteress [i.e., not a priestess, but rather the wife of a presbyter] as a sister, but avoided her like the enemy, and never allowed her to come near him. Never permitting himself on any occasion to visit her, he cut himself off absolutely from all familiar communion with her. ... After a long life in which he had spent forty years in the priestly ministry he was taken with a severe fever and lay at the point of death. When his wife saw him lying there half-dead and with all his bodily strength wasted away she put her ear to his face to catch the least sound of breathing. Aware of her presence, he gathered all his strength and with the little breath he had left he rasped out in a hoarse whisper, "Get away from me, woman! The fire is still smoldering! Take away the tinder!"

—636, *Death of Saint Isidore of Seville, end of the patristic period in the West*

ca. 645—Saint John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

Someone caught up in the affairs of the world can make progress, if he is determined. But it is not easy. Those bearing chains can still walk. But they often stumble and are thereby injured. The man, who is unmarried and in the world, for all that he may be burdened, can nevertheless make haste toward the monastic life. But the married man is like someone chained hand and foot.

722—Pope Saint Gregory II, 89th Bishop of Rome, *Letter Investing Boniface with Episcopal Authority*

—*Inference of an all-male clergy*—

Acceding without delay to your praiseworthy desire, we have raised our colleague Boniface to the episcopal dignity. We have commanded him not to ordain a man who has been married twice or one who has married a woman not a virgin, or one who is not fully instructed, or a man suffering from a physical defect, or who is notorious for a crime whether civil or ecclesiastical, or who is known to be subject to some liability. If he finds such persons in office he shall not advance them.

—ca. 749, *Death of Saint John Damascene, end of the patristic period in the East*

802—Charlemagne, King of the Franks and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, *Capitulary*

35 That all men shall at all times, in the service and will of God, venerate with all honour their bishops and priests. Let them not dare to pollute themselves and others by incestuous nuptials; let them not presume to be wedded until the bishops and priests, together with the elders of the people, shall diligently inquire into the degree of blood-relationship between those being joined together. And then, with a benediction, let them be wedded.

c. 930—*The Life of Saint Lebuin*

Suddenly Lebuin appeared in the middle of the circle, clothed in his priestly garments, bearing a cross in his hands and a copy of the Gospels in the crook of his arm. Raising his voice, he said: "Listen to me, listen. I am the messenger of Almighty God and to you Saxons I bring his command."

—1054, *Start of the Eastern Schism*

1081—Pope Saint Gregory VII, 157th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Bishop of Metz*

And what king or emperor is able, by reason of the office he holds, to rescue a Christian from the power of the devil through holy baptism, to number him among the sons of God, and to fortify him with the divine unction? Who of them can by his own words make the body and blood of our Lord,—the greatest act in the Christian religion? Or who of them possesses the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth? From all of these considerations it is clear how greatly the priestly office excels in power.

Who of them can ordain a single clerk in the holy Church, much less depose him for any fault? For in the orders of the Church a greater power is needed to depose than to ordain. Bishops may ordain other bishops, but can by no means depose them without the authority of the apostolic see. Who, therefore, of even moderate understanding, can hesitate to give priests the precedence over kings?

1111—Pope Paschal II, 160th Bishop of Rome, *Privilege of the First Convention*

[T]he custom has grown up—intolerably for the church—that elected bishops should by no means receive consecration unless they had first been invested through the hand of the king. From which cause both the wickedness of simoniacal heresy and, at times, so great an ambition has prevailed that the episcopal sees were invaded without any previous election. ... Aroused by these and very many other evils which had happened for the most part through investitures, our predecessors the pontiffs [Saint] Gregory VII (reign. 1073-85) and [Blessed] Urban II (reign. 1088-99) of blessed memory, frequently calling together episcopal councils did condemn those investitures of the lay hand, and did decree that those [bishops] who should have obtained churches through them should be deposed.

1266-1272—Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, *Summa Theologica*

3:37:1 The Church is Christ's mystical body, like to our natural body, according to the Apostle (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:24). Now in the natural body there are various offices of the members. Therefore in the Church also there should be various Orders.

Further, the ministry of the New Testament is superior to that of the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3). Now in the Old Testament not only the priests, but also their ministers, the Levites, were consecrated. Therefore likewise in the New Testament not only the priests but also their ministers should be consecrated by the sacrament of Order; and consequently there ought to be several Orders.

1377-1378—Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, *The Dialogue*

113 [*God the Father*]: O dearest daughter, I have told you all this so that you may better know how I have dignified my ministers, and thus grieve the more over their wickedness. If they themselves had considered their dignity, they would not have fallen into the darkness of deadly sin nor muddied the face of their souls. Not only have they sinned against me and against their own dignity, but even had they given their bodies to be burned they would not have been able to repay me for the tremendous grace and blessing they have received, for it is impossible to have a greater dignity than their in this life.

They are my anointed ones and I call them my "christs," because I have appointed them to be my ministers to you and have sent them like fragrant flowers into the mystic body of holy Church. No angel has this dignity, but I have given it to those men whom I have chosen to be my ministers. I have sent them like angels, and they ought to be earthly angels in this life.

...

114 [M]y ministers ought to be provided by you with material help in their needs, and you ought to be provided for and nourished by them with grace and spiritual gifts, that is, with the holy sacraments I have established in holy Church for them to administer to you for your salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:11). ...

115 Christ on earth [i.e., the Pope], then, has the keys to the blood (Matt. 16:19). If you remember, I showed you this in an image when I wanted to teach you the respect laypeople ought to have for these ministers of mine, regardless of how good or evil they may be, and how displeased I am with disrespect. You know that I set before you the mystic body of holy Church under the image of a wine cellar. In this wine cellar was the blood of my only-begotten Son, and from this blood all the sacraments derive their life-giving power.

1418—Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

—*Consecrated celibacy*—

1:25 Observe how many behave, who live strictly under the monastic discipline. They seldom go out, they live retired, they eat the poorest food; they work hard, they talk little, they keep long watches; they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they study much, and always guard themselves with discipline. Consider the Carthusians, the Cistercians, and the monks and nuns of the various Order, how they rise each night to sing praises to Our Lord. Were you slothful, this should shame you, when so great a company of Religious are beginning the praises of God. ...

4:5 *On the Dignity of the Sacrament, and of the Priestly Office*

CHRIST. Had you the purity of the Angels, and the holiness of Saint John the Baptist, you would still be unworthy to receive or touch this Sacrament [of Holy Communion]. For it is not due to any merit of his own that a man is allowed to consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ, and receive the Bread of Angels (Ps. 78:26 [25]) as his food. High the office, and great the dignity of a priest, to whom is granted what is not granted to Angels; for only a rightly ordained priest has power to celebrate the Eucharist and to hallow the Body of Christ. The priest is the minister of God, using the words of God by His own command and appointment: but God Himself is the principal agent and unseen worker, to whose will all things are subject (Wis. 12:18), and whose command all creatures obey. ...

[W]hen you approach the Altar, let it be with awe and reverence. Consider from whom this ministry proceeds, that has been delivered to you by the imposition of the Bishop's hands (1 Tim. 4:14). You have been made a priest, and ordained to celebrate the Sacrament.

—1517, *Start of the Protestant Revolt*

1594-1596—Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Controversies The Lack of Mission In the Ministers of the New Pretended Church Leaves Both Them and Their Followers Without Excuse.*

1:1 For in effect, to stand up as preacher of God's Word and pastor of souls,—what is it but to call oneself ambassador and legate of Our Lord, according to that of the Apostle: "We are therefore ambassadors for Christ?" (2 Cor. 5:20). And to say that the whole Church has erred, and all truth disappeared,—what is this but to

say that Our Lord has abandoned his Church, has broken the sacred tie of marriage he had contracted with her? And to put forward a new Church,—is it not to attempt to thrust upon this sacred and holy Husband a second wife? This is what the ministers of the pretended church have undertaken; this is what they boast of having done; this has been the aim of their discourses, their designs, their writings. But what an injustice have you not committed in believing them? How did you come to take their word so simply? How did you so lightly give them credit?

To be legates and ambassadors they should have been sent, they should have had letters of credit from him whom they boast of being sent by. The affairs [of the Protestant Revolt] were of the greatest importance, for there was question of disturbing the whole Church. The persons who undertook them were extraordinaries, of mean quality, and private persons; while the ordinary pastors were men of mark, and of most ancient and acknowledged reputation, who contradicted them and protested that these extraordinaries had no charge nor commandment of the Master. Tell me, what business had you to hear them and believe them without having any assurance of their commission and of the approval of Our Lord, whose legates they called themselves? In a word, you have no justification for having quitted that ancient Church in which you were baptized, on the faith of preachers who had no legitimate mission from the Master.

Now you cannot be ignorant that they neither had, nor have, in any way at all, this mission. For if Our Lord had sent them, it would have been either mediately or immediately. We say mission is given mediately when we are sent by one who has from God the power of sending, according to the order which he has appointed in his church; and such was the mission of Saint Denis into France by Clement and of Timothy by Saint Paul. Immediate mission is when God himself commands and gives a charge, without the interposition of the ordinary authority which he has placed in the prelates and pastors of the Church: as Saint Peter and the Apostles were sent, receiving from Our Lord's own mouth this commandment: "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); and as Moses received his mission to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel. But neither in the one nor in the other way have your ministers any mission. How then have they

undertaken to preach? “How shall they preach,” says the Apostle, “unless they be sent?” (Rom. 10:15).

1660—Saint Maria de Agreda, *The City of God: The Transfixion*

1:11 Concerning the sixth Sacrament, Holy Orders, [Holy Mary] understood how her most blessed Son, the provident Founder of grace and of the Church, thereby constituted apt ministers of his Sacraments for the sanctification of his mystical body and for the consecration of his body and blood; giving them a dignity above that of all men and of the angels themselves. This caused in Her such an extreme reverence for the dignity of priests, that She began from that moment to revere and honor them. She asked the Almighty to make them worthy and efficient ministers of his graces and to inspire the faithful with a high veneration for the priesthood.

1758—Pope Clement XIII, 248th Bishop of Rome, *A Quo Die*

—*Inference of an all-male clergy—*

13 In considering someone’s suitability for the ministry, do not rely only on individual enthusiasm or on someone’s recommendation. You should consider as best suited to be a faithful minister and to receive a part of the Lord’s flock the man whose timid virtue shirks the ministry. “Do not be too quick to lay hands on any man” (1 Tim. 5:22) which happens if we do not consider and test the men over and over again. Lest we pay the price to God for imprudent rashness and share in another’s sin (1 Tim. 5:22), let him be tested carefully and accurately and judge severely.

1896—Leo XIII, *Apostolicae Curae*

The words which, until quite recent times, have been generally held by Anglicans to be the proper form of priestly ordination: “Receive the Holy Spirit,” certainly do not signify definitely the Order of the priesthood or its grace and power, which is pre-eminently the power “to consecrate and offer the true body and blood of the Lord” in that sacrifice which is no “mere commemoration of the sacrifice accomplished on the Cross.”

1991—Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *Loving Jesus*

6 Several years ago, the president of Yemen asked me to allow some Sisters to go to that country. He wanted a home of the Missionaries of Charity to be established in Yemen.

That country had been deprived of Catholic priests and nuns for six hundred years. There were no tabernacles there, no churches, no parishes! It was a completely Muslim country.

I told the president, “I am willing to allow the Sisters to go if you give permission for a priest to go with us. Because without Jesus, we will not go.” And then the president gave us permission.

I had never before realized the greatness of the priesthood until I saw it in Yemen. When the priest came, the altar, the tabernacle, and Jesus [in the Blessed Sacrament] came with him. All those years there had not been an altar, a tabernacle, or Jesus.

Now we have three houses there, with three tabernacles in them. The people that come to work there use our homes as centers of prayer.

This is the greatness of the priesthood.

2004—Pope Saint John Paul the Great, 264th Bishop of Rome, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*

Such considerations should help shed light upon our daily duties and priorities [as bishops]. This pertains not only to celebrating the Eucharist and administering the sacrament of Confirmation, but also to baptizing children and those adults who have been prepared by our local Church to become disciples of Christ. Nor should we underestimate the importance of personally hearing confessions and visiting the sick to administer the sacrament of Anointing, instituted specifically for the sick. Another important duty for a bishop, which he shares with his pastors, is solicitude for the sanctity of marriage; when it is possible, he should celebrate marriages personally.

Priests, as coworkers of the bishop, naturally assume most of these duties.