



Domine , non sum dignus!

Steps to the Priesthood



1. THE TAKING OF THE CASSOCK: A young man, after prayer, reflection and counsel, decides to turn his back on all things mundane.

He dons a black cassock which is a symbol of death to world.



2. THE TONSURE: The Church officially adopts the seminarian as its own child. The ceremony has its roots in the ancient Roman

ceremony of adoption of children. Hair is cut from the front, back, left and right of the head in the form of a cross.



3. PORTER: The Ostiarate is the first of the four minor orders and it bestows upon the seminarian the duty of guarding the House of God and everything within. He touches the keys of the sacristy and

church and then opens and closes the door of the church in a symbolic exercise of his new function.



4. LECTOR: . The Lectorate is the second minor order and is received immediately after the first. Kneeling in front of the Bishop the ordinand places his fingers on top of the book proffered by the Bishop (a missal, breviary or evangelarium) with his thumb touching the pages. The lector has the privilege of reading the lessons at matins and the prophecies of Ember Saturdays and Holy Saturday.



5. *EXORCIST*: The Exorcistate is third minor order; it gives the seminarian the power to cast out demons; it is a real power and is usually only exercised during the administration of the sacrament

of Baptism. Only a priest with explicit permission from his Bishop can perform a solemn exorcism of a possessed soul. During the ceremony, the seminarian touches the ritual presented to him by the Bishop.



6. ACOLYTE: The Acolytate is the fourth and highest of the minor orders. In the ordination ceremony the Bishop presents the candidate with a candlestick and unlit candle which he touches with his thumb and index finger respectively while the bishop says, "Receive the candlestick and candle and know that it is your duty to light the lights of the church in the name of the Lord". The

candidate is then presented with an empty cruet to touch while the Bishop says, "Receive the cruet, to minister wine and water for the Eucharist of the Blood of Christ, in the name of the Lord."

In recent times, because few parishes have any ordained acolytes to serve at the altar, laymen are allowed to take their place.



7. SUBDEACON: The Subdiaconate is the first of the major orders. It is the decisive step in the life of a cleric in which he assumes the obligation of observing perfect chastity in the unmarried state and of reciting the Divine Office. The official duties of the subdeacon are to read the epistle, to hand the chalice and paten to the deacon during

the Mass, to prepare the water for the chalice, and to wash the altar cloths and corporals. During the ceremony the newly ordained subdeacon touches a chalice and paten, a pair of cruets containing water and wine and a basin and towel.



... He is then invested with the insignia of his office: the amice (symbolising moderation in speech), the maniple (fruit

of good works), tunicle (joy) and then touches the epistolarium.



8. DEACON: The Deaconate is the second of the major orders but is the first order which is a part of sacrament of Holy Orders. It leaves an indelible mark upon the soul of the ordinand and obliges him to fulfil

his duties of reading the Gospel, preaching, assisting the priest at the Holy Sacrifice, distributing Holy Communion and even administering the sacrament of baptism on particular occasions.



.... After the epistle of the ordination Mass, the bishop is requested by the archdeacon on behalf of the Church to ordain the candidates. The bishop then ceremonially inquires as to the worthiness of the candidates and then consults the people, asking if there be any reason why any of the candidates might not be ordained. If there are none, the order is conferred by the Imposition of Hands followed by the words “Send forth, we beseech Thee O

Lord, the Holy Ghost that they might be strengthened by Him, through the gift of Thy sevenfold grace, unto the faithful discharge of Thy service.”

Each new deacon is then invested with the insignia of his office: a stole (symbolising the sweet yolk of God’s law) and a dalmatic (symbolising joy and justice). He then touches the evangelium and receives the power to read the gospel.



THE PRIESTHOOD: 1. The third major order is the priesthood. It is the greatest gift that can be bestowed on a man in a state of grace. It is a sacrament by which he becomes ‘another Christ’. By receiving this sacrament, a man has a character imprinted on his soul which assimilates him to Christ, the eternal High Priest, giving him power over the physical Body of Christ by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and giving him power over the Mystical Body of Christ by being able to forgive sins and perform constitutive blessings. The first part of the ceremony—the ‘Call’ of the candidates by the archdeacon, the ‘Postulation’ in which the bishop is requested to

ordain the candidates, the ‘Scrutiny’ by which the bishop verifies that the candidates are worthy, the ‘Consultation’ of the people to see if there are any known impediments, the ‘Instruction’ of the candidates by the Bishop and the ‘Prostration and Litany of the Saints’—is common with the ordination to the diaconate. After the epistle of the ordination Mass, but before the last Alleluia of the Gradual, the most important part of the ceremony commences: the transformation of the ordinands into “priests forever according to the order of Melchisedech.” ...



.... The matter of the sacrament of Orders is the imposition of hands by the Bishop. The form of the sacrament are particular words of the “Order Preface” which are sung immediately after the imposition of hands:

“We beseech Thee, Almighty Father, invest these Thy servants with the dignity of the priesthood. Renew in their hearts the spirit of holiness, that they may hold the office, next to ours in importance, which they have received from Thee, O Lord, and, by the example of their lives, indicate a rule of conduct.”

All the other ceremonies are not necessary for the validity of the sacrament, but they have been part of the ordination ceremony for at least 1000 years to express more fully what is bestowed by the sacrament.



2. Investiture with Priestly Vestments:

“Receive the yolk of the Lord; for His yolk is sweet and His burden light.”

“Receive the priestly vestment, by which charity is signified: for God is powerful to increase unto thee charity and perfection of work.”



3. Anointing of Hands:

“Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands by this unction and by our ✠ blessing...that whatsoever they may bless may be blessed, and whatsoever they may consecrate be consecrated and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

4. *Touching of the chalice filled with wine and paten with an unconsecrated host:*

“Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Mass for the living as well as for the dead. In the name of the Lord.”





5. The First Mass: The first Mass of the newly ordained priest is the Mass of his ordination (not the day after). Kneeling before a missal and accompanied by an assistant priest, each new priest pronounces in a low voice the

prayers of the Mass from the offertory until the Post Communion. At the words of consecration, each new priest raises his right hand as he exercises his supernatural power of consecration for the first time.

6. *Unfolding the chasuble:*

After the ablutions following Holy Communion, the ordination ceremony continues with a profession of faith and then the symbolic bestowal of the power to forgive sins:

“Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” And then unfolding the chasuble, “May the Lord clothe you with the robe of innocence.”





7. *Promise of obedience:*

“ Do you promise to the Bishop, your Ordinary, reverence and obedience”

“Promitto.”



8. *Kiss of Peace:*

*“Pax Domini sit
semper tecum.”*

“Amen.”



9. Conclusion:

The ceremony concludes with a final instruction, a solemn blessing, the concluding prayers of the Mass, the last blessing, an admonition and, of course, a heartfelt Te Deum.

The newly ordained priests then give their first blessing to their families and the faithful.

Deo gratias.