

ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

Southern Africa Sub-Commission

ORDINATION

(Second Draft: May 1973)

I The Purpose of Ordination

Christ, through the visible and historic community of his members, commissions and empowers by the Holy Spirit those who are called by God to discharge particular functions indispensable to the Church's life. The community created by Christ is a structured community.

The basic purpose of ordaining a ministry is to help the Church to realize itself and to fulfil its total ministry [Ephesians 4:12]. The Church does not delegate ministry to those who are ordained in the sense that they take it over completely for the Church. They serve the Church, the covenant community: they express its ministry in theirs.

Ministers are ordained to represent Christ's own ministry, which itself belongs to the whole Church. As the ordained ministry represents sacramentally Christ's unending ministry to the Church, the conferring of any particular order on a person cannot be repeated.

The ordained ministry is instrumental to the preservation and actualization of the apostolicity of the Church. The orderly transmission of the apostolic ministry in ordination is normally an essential part of the means by which the Church is kept from generation to generation in the apostolic faith [WCC FO/72:18 p. 11].

Both our communions accept the historic threefold ordained ministry of Bishop, Priest and Deacon. However, we recognize that the Church, open to the leading of the

Holy Spirit and in response to changing conditions, may evolve varied patterns of ministry as seen, for example, in the changing form of the Diaconate.

II The Holy Spirit and Efficacy

Christ bestowed the Holy Spirit on His Body the Church. Accordingly, the ministry of the Church towards the world, and the ministry of bishops, priests and deacons which enables the Church to carry out its mission, is also the work of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ.

On the one hand the Church acknowledges that the Holy Spirit works where He wills and His activity cannot be limited to a certain group of people. God is free [Exodus 3:14; John 3:8]. On the other, we are led by the New Testament to believe that the Holy Spirit does inspire the covenant community, the Church, and in that sense the Holy Spirit, through the Church, does commission and empower those called by God and the community to discharge particular functions in the Church's life [John 20:22-23].

Here is a tension which has been expressed in the past in terms of an individual's vocation under the Holy Spirit to the ordained ministry, and the Church's right to accept or refuse him as a candidate.

The validity of an ordination has always been easier to gauge than personal vocation under the Holy Spirit, which is difficult if not impossible to assess.

For some, acceptance by the Church and conferring of orders are seen as constitutive of vocation. Others have seen ordination as the ratification by the Church of the individual's conviction that he has been called by God.

Dependence on the Holy Spirit applies both to the

individual and to the Church community. The Holy Spirit calls individuals to offer themselves for the ministry; He calls the Church community to select persons for the ministry. Patterns of ministry and criteria for selection may vary according to the needs of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The use of the rite of prayer and the laying on of hands is necessary in order to proclaim the Church's action, yet the decisive and determining factor in the efficacy of ordination is the action of Christ through the Holy Spirit in response to the Church's prayer.

III Community

God Who is the source of ministry is also the source of the community for whose service ministry exists. He has, through Christ and the Spirit, created both and given to both their meaning and interdependence.

Christ has a two-fold relationship with this community, the Church. The ascended Christ represents us, his brothers with whom He identifies Himself, to the Father. He is also the Head of His Body, the Church, present among men to realize the ministry entrusted to Him by the Father.

The ordained ministry represents sacramentally both these aspects of Christ's relationship with the community.

There is therefore a close relationship between the ordained ministry and the community in which neither is simply subordinated to the other. The ordained ministry does not simply derive from the Community; nor does the community simply derive from the ordained ministry. They are the creation of the Father through Christ and the Spirit in order that the structured Church may be the sacrament of unity in Christ. As a result both the

community of faith and the ministry belong inseparably together. Ministry is meaningless apart from the community whose faith it must serve and preserve. Community cannot exist as the sacrament of unity in Christ without ministry.

All this has its application to apostolicity and catholicity.

The apostolic succession cannot be seen exclusively in terms of community; nor can it be seen exclusively in terms of the structured succession of ministry. Apostolicity includes both the community of faith and the ordained ministry. The apostolicity of the one cannot exist fully without that of the other.

An apostolic succession represents sacramentally the community's transcendence of time, so catholicity represents its transcendence of nation and culture. But essential to catholicity is community. The local community is part of the catholic community not only in virtue of its common faith but also because its ministers share in the collegial ministry that is part of the structure of the catholic Church.

Ordination is not simply, therefore, the passing on of a commission by an individual to an individual, nor merely an authorization by a local group to one of its members to serve it. It makes the individual a member of a corporate ministerial structure that both reflects and serves the wider community of the Church itself. The community to which the individual ordinand's ministry is related is, therefore, not simply or necessarily a specified community but the catholic body itself.

Every individual act of ordination is an expression of the continuing apostolicity and catholicity of the whole Church.

IV The Rite

All ministry is participation in the kingly, priestly and prophetic ministry of Christ Himself. Ordained ministry is conferred by Christ through His presence and action in His members. The Bishops who ordain are representatives of all the people of God. They are symbols of the unity and catholicity of the Church and of its obedience to the apostolic faith. The sacramental nature of ordination is illustrated by its setting in the context of the Eucharist, the characteristic activity of Christ and all His members in which His presence and the reality and unity of the Church are supremely realized.

Reference should be made in the rite itself to the preparation and testing undergone by candidates before their ordination. The whole congregation as well as those who present him to the Bishop must openly declare that they believe the candidate to be worthy of ordination. Each candidate must affirm in their presence that he is willing to accept the ministry about to be laid upon him by Christ and His Church in the conviction that this is his vocation.

The charge given to the candidate as well as the promises made by him must make clear the particular responsibility of his ministry: to represent God before men and men before God; to deepen his unity with Christ and obedience to Him by steadfastness in prayer; to build up and extend Christ's Church by serving all men for His sake, by proclaiming God's Word and administering the Sacraments.

The rites for the ordination of bishops, priests and deacons contain various ritual and ceremonial words and actions of which the laying on of hands with prayer is generally regarded as indispensable. Explicit reference in the rite to the particular order being conferred is

unnecessary, provided that this is made clear by the context. Symbolic actions not essential to the rite and introduced into it at different times illustrate and emphasize various aspects of the ministry conferred, but care must be taken that no particular aspect is so emphasized as to obscure the importance of others.