

the *Presbyter*

The Publication of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



Jan. 2004 • vol. VI • issue 1

Letter From The President

My brothers in Christ,

In the book of Deuteronomy there is a beautiful passage in chapter 32, Moses' final address to his people before his death and prior to their entering the Promised Land. In his address he uses a powerful image familiar to desert dwellers and peoples of the ancient world. He speaks of an eagle teaching her eaglets how to fly and their first encounter out of the nest. In the areas around the Promised Land, eagles would build their nests high in the cliffs – a protection from predators and a strategic vantage point from which to hunt. In the building of their nests eagles start with large branches and complete the inside of the new dwelling with more comfortable finer twigs, grasses and down for the newly hatched eaglets.

When it is time for the eaglets to leave the nest the eagle disturbs it, literally causing the larger branches to stick up throughout creating a painful time for the eaglet. This whole process forces the young birds to the edge of the nest where they ultimately fall off the cliff flapping their wings trying desperately to fly. The eaglets never fall into peril however, because the powerful mother eagle flies under its eaglets and carries them on the pinions of her wings to safety. In this seemingly strange episode, the eaglet that was very comfortable in its nest is forced to move into its next phase of life, which ultimately enables it to soar through the heavens with utter grace and elegance. Moses sought to reassure his people that God will disturb the nest of our lives where often we think we are falling into peril.

But in this rich imagery, we recognize that God Almighty catches us on the pinions of his wings and in that process we to learn to soar and grow in glory in our own personal walk in life.

This wonderful illustration captures the spirit of our work in the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council. Ever aware of the need to grow and meet new challenges, the theme of our work revolves around clergy wellness through spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being and growth. The APC has proposed a plan for ongoing education for all clergy to provide us with the tools and resources necessary to see both ourselves and those entrusted to our spiritual care from a new vantage point. A committee has been developed to promote vocations to the priesthood of our national church and we challenge all priests to reach out and find faithful men to minister in the vineyard of the Lord. Our national retreat this past November was an excellent forum through which we sought to look honestly at ourselves and reinforce those values and ideals that characterized our initial commitment of service and dedication to Christ and His Church. We applaud the work of Holy Cross and Hellenic College and seek to support Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou and his outstanding staff for their vision and dedication to the mission of our beloved theological school. We are reaching out to our presbyteres and retired brothers with whom we minister to foster richer relationships and meaningful opportunities for

personal growth and service to the Church. All of these areas are unique possibilities for us to grow and ultimately soar as priests, husbands, fathers and community leaders so that we too can enter the Promised Land and be all that we can be. Please review the summary of our Chicago APC meeting minutes in which we meet jointly with our Sisterhood of Presbyteres and Retired Clergy executive boards to capture the spirit of our work.

When our nests and our lives are disturbed, when peril seems close at hand, be watchful for the pinions of the Lord catching us and setting us anew in richer and more wonderful experiences by which we are able to soar and come to know the glory of our God.

May God grant you every grace in the New Year!



—Rev. Jim Moulketis
President, APC
Pastor,
St. Nicholas Church
Wyckoff, NJ

In This Issue...

Letter from the President

Rev. Jim Moulketis

Minutes - APC June Meeting

Rev. Paul Kaplanis

Christian Priesthood and Ecclesial Unity

Professor Constantine Scouteris

The Priesthood: Contemporary and Classic Exerpts:

Saint Kosmas Aitolos

Archdiocese Presbyters Council Meeting Oak Lawn, Illinois · June 2-4, 2003

Frs. Timothy Bakakos and John Kalomas hosted our spring meeting at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Oak Lawn Illinois. It was the first time the Presbyters Council met jointly with the boards of the National Presbyteres Sisterhood and the Retired Clergy. His Grace Bishop Savas of Troas, Fr Michael Kontogiorgis, Fr James Gordon and Fr Costa Sitaras also participated in these meetings.

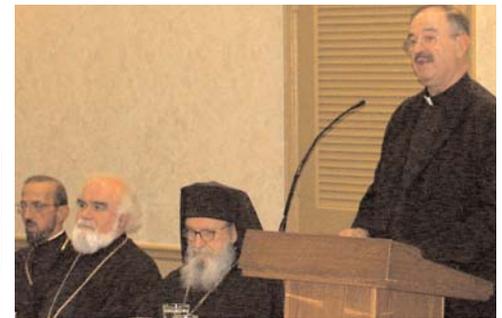
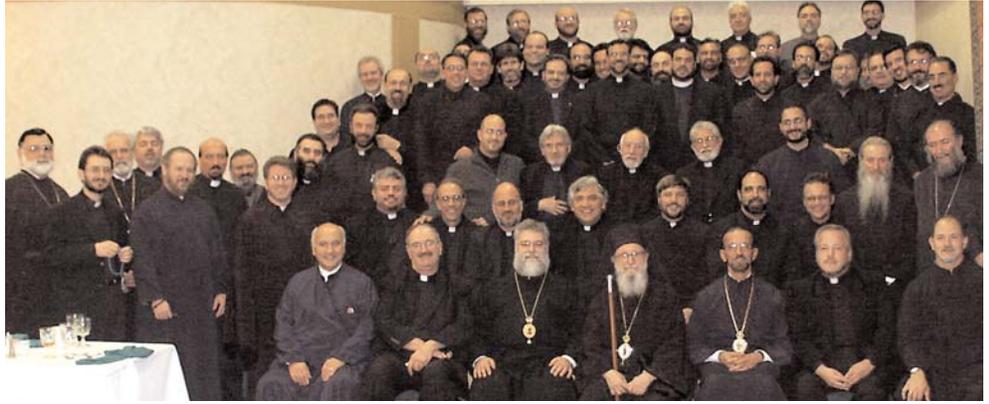
His Grace Bishop Savas conveyed the blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios and reported on matters concerning assignments and transfers. In the president's report, Fr Moulketis restated that the APC must be a powerful forum for clergy concerns. Our work seeks to fortify and support our brother priests in their work, their ministry, and their family life at home.

After the treasurer's report prepared by Fr. Thomas Chininis it was decided to increase the stewardship request of each Metropolitan Diocesan Clergy Syndesmos from \$10 per priest to \$20 per priest effective immediately.

Fr. Stephen Kyriacou, the chairman of the Archdiocese Benefits Committee, reported that the ABC wrote to the Archbishop requesting the Finance Committee consider contributing \$500,000 to put our clergy pension plan on better footing. Other measures are also being implemented to increase the contributions toward the pension fund. For a period of 3 years, starting in 2004, the following will take effect:

- 1) increase of personal contributions from 2 ½ % to 3 ½ %
- 2) the annual benefit accrual will be reduced from 2 ½ % - 1 ½% of pension earnings
- 3) the parish monthly obligation will increase from \$320 - \$350.

The Ongoing Education Committee is chaired by Fr. Christopher Metropulos, with committee members Frs. Nicholas Pathenos and William Christ. They proposed a program for implementation



Photos from the national clergy retreat, Shepherding with Knowledge held at Stone Mountain Georgia near Atlanta, November 5-7, 2003

following the guidelines of ongoing education outlined in the military chaplaincy. The APC wholeheartedly endorsed the work of Fr. Nicholas Triantafilou and his staff at Hellenic College/Holy Cross. The APC is eagerly looking forward to the national clergy retreat to be held at Stone Mountain Inn outside Atlanta, Georgia on November 5-7. His Grace Bishop Gerasimos will be the facilitator along with Fr Costa Sitaras, focusing on clergy wellness, spiritually, emotionally and physically. His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios will also join us. We are confident that all the clergy of our national church will be enriched by this encounter. We recognize we are responsible for encouraging other men to seek out the priesthood and become ministers of the Gospel. We seek to promote this in various ways.

The highlight of our gathering was the joint session we shared with the executive committee of the National

Sisterhood of Presvyteres and the Retired Clergy Association. Presvytera Angie Constantinides, the President of the Sisterhood, introduced Presvyteras Jane Andrews, Toula Poteres and Pearl Bithos. Clergy marriage was of prime importance. Fr. Sitaras facilitated a session in which these matters were discussed. Four areas were outlined focusing on the preservation of healthy clergy marriages. Prevention-Diagnosis-Symptoms-Cure. Subsequently areas of common family concerns were identified for both married and celibate clergy. Basic solutions were then discussed.

Father Evagoras Constantinides, President of the RCA was welcomed and he introduced the other members of the Retried Clergy Association who were in attendance:

Frs. Gaines, Dombalis, Raptis and Adams. Fr. Evagoras suggested that we do not just talk about issues, but come up with solutions.

Recommendations offered:

- 1) A chaplain to be designated for each Metropolis for retired clergy, widowed presbyteres and active priests to address problems. This would be offered so that priests would be able to talk to a brother priest. A few of the Metropolises have vicars and some may be functioning also as chaplains. We should come up with a universal program throughout the Archdiocese.
- 2) Pensions for the retired priests in need. There are several who receive \$500 per month and we would like to raise it to \$1,000 per month.

Other concerns were: the relationship between current pastor and retired predecessor and the need for understanding and respect for each other as well as mutual giving and mutual acceptance. The retired clergy belong to the Metropolis they live in.

The exchange among the three groups was rich and mutually beneficial with a future gathering slated for March 2004. Other topics discussed were Monastic Communities and their relationship to the parish. A desire for healthy monasticism in the Church as a positive reinforcement of our work was expressed. Too often some of the current monastic communities are not supportive and unjustly critical of many programs at the parish level. The Charter and its impact on the National Church and each Metropolis and local Parish are ongoing topics of discussion.

The Presbyters Council will hold its next meeting in Atlanta, Georgia on November 4, 2003 just prior to the National Priests Retreat. After that, we will meet in March 2004 in Fort Lauderdale, FL where we will be hosted by Father Christopher Metropulos.

—Rev. Paul Kaplanis
Secretary
Archdiocesan Presbyters Council
Pastor, Holy Trinity Church
Raleigh, North Carolina

Christian Priesthood and Ecclesial Unity: some theological and canonical considerations

1. The records of the early Christian tradition leave no doubt that Christian priesthood is not a “function” necessary for the institutional being of the Church. Nor is it an autonomous, isolated and self-sufficient office belonging to the ordained individual. It is rather a ministry related to and belonging to the entire ecclesial body. We can think of it as an anaphoral reality that is always in reference to and leads to the saving communion of the Body of Christ.

From the very outset of Christian history, priesthood is understood as a living testimony, as the constant and continuing presence of Christ in every historic “now” in the life of the Church. It was viewed as a token of the Paschal fulfillment and parousia, a gift bestowed upon all Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that priesthood was considered an integral part of the ecclesial reality, related to and proceeding from the economy of Pentecost.

In order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the place of priesthood within the Christian community, it is important to stress its foundation in Christology and Pneumatology, in Christ and the Spirit. Any attempt to approach priesthood from a monistic point of view, i.e. as an autonomous subject, leads to scholastic interpretations and speculations foreign to the apostolic tradition.



Even a cursory study of the New Testament data reveals the fact that all titles related to ministry and priesthood are given to Christ Himself: Christ is “apostle and high priest” (Hebrews 3:1). He is “priest” (Hebrews 8:4), “teacher” and “rabbi” (Matthew 23:7-8). He is “a prophet ... and more than a prophet” (Matthew 11:9). He is “the shepherd and bishop of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25) and also “the chief shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4). Christ is “among us as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27). He is the “diakonos” (Romans 15: 8). In His priestly ministry, Christ has “given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:2). In the New Testament, Christ is both the sacrificial victim and the priest who performs the sacrificing action. We have been sanctified through the offering

of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. *“Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:10-14).

In spite of the individual characteristics and significant differences in terms of perspective and style among such writers as Matthew, Paul, Peter and Luke, there is nothing more striking than their essential unity amid all diversity. This unity is basically that of a common attitude to Jesus Christ. There is among all New Testament authors a common sense that Christ *“is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence”* (Colossians 1:18).

the priesthood is the projection of the saving work of Christ throughout the centuries

Thus, from the authors of the New Testament themselves, from their understanding and conception of Christ, we can say that Christian priesthood is directly related to Christ's ministry. The point is that priesthood is not simply a result of Christ's service in the world, nor duplicate or parallel to such service, but somehow it is ontologically incorporated and

identified with Christ's ministry. If the Church is Christ Himself extended into history, equally then Christian priesthood is Christ's priestly office realized and extended in every historic period of the life of the Church. It is, so to speak, the reflection and the projection¹ of the saving work of Christ throughout the centuries. This means that priesthood is so inextricably bound up with the Person of Christ that our perception of the historical Jesus and of His ministry involves and determines our view of Christian priesthood.

At the heart of the early Christian tradition stands the position that Jesus Christ is the “first-born” and the only High Priest, according to the Father's nature². The Apostles and those consecrated thereafter received the gift of priesthood “from the power of Christ, the eternal priest”³. By asserting that priesthood is not to be seen in isolation, but as an event which must be taken in close connection with the fact of Christ, we mean that the primary content of priesthood is neither individualistic and functional, in the narrow sense of the those terms, but it is essentially Christological.

2. This Christological understanding of priesthood leads to its Pneumatological foundation, given that *“no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is only through the “economy of the Spirit” that we can approach the economy of the Son. The Holy Spirit was sent into the world through and in

the name of the Son, in order to teach and bring to our remembrance all the things that Christ did for us and said to us (John 14: 26). It should be observed in this connection that the economy of the Son and the economy of the Spirit are not parallel, distinct, independent or self-determined divine actions. As the Son entered into the human reality *“incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary”*, so also the Holy Spirit comes into the world, being sent by the Son, to be an unceasing testimony to His work (John 15: 26), i.e., to be a continuous historic presence for the realization of Christ's ministry. Thus, through the Holy Spirit, Christ's priesthood remains present in the “here and now” of the Church's life. It is through the Holy Spirit that priesthood, in its historic manifestation, is related to Christ's priesthood. Christian priesthood and the priesthood of Christ belong together and should never be conceived apart, given that the Holy Spirit fills with His presence the Church and manifests Christ to all.

The Christological and the Pneumatological aspects of priesthood are inseparably blended together in a harmonious and unique synthesis. The Christian priesthood involves the participation in Christ's own priestly mission. It is precisely the personal descent of the Holy Spirit upon the newly ordained that guarantees this participation. This means that the ordained person, through the Holy Spirit, is directly connected with the priesthood

of Christ. Through the epiclesis and the coming of the Holy Spirit in the ordination, the priesthood of Christ is offered to the newly ordained and remains alive and effectual within the ecclesial body. Thus the Holy Spirit, which was from the beginning with the Son, creating the cosmos, leading and inspiring the prophets, incarnating the eternal Logos of God in man, being always with Christ, raising Him from the dead and constituting the Apostolic Church⁴, realizes Christ's own priesthood within the historic life of the Church. In other words, the Holy Spirit remains as the vital link between Christ's own priesthood and the Christian priesthood. In considering priesthood and its relationship to Pneumatology, we must make special reference to the economy of Pentecost. It is well known that for the Church, Pentecost is not simply a historic event, but rather a continuous and dynamic Presence, an always on going, vital and flowing life. The late Fr. George Florovsky makes the observation that "Pentecost becomes eternal in the Apostolic Succession, that is in the uninterruptedness of hierarchical ordinations in which every part of the Church is at every moment organically united with the primary source"⁵. Thus, through the ordained ministry, the entire ecclesial body is related to the divine economy of the Son and the Spirit. Priesthood becomes an instrument for the realization of ecclesial communion, which is offered at every historic moment as a

continuous Pentecostal event. In this perspective, what we call "Apostolic Succession" is not a narrowly conceived canonical principle, but rather indicates and signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit, that unique gift of which brings the entire Church into the continuity of the charismatic life.

3. When adopting the view that Jesus Christ remains actively present, through the Holy Spirit, in the Christian priesthood, in fact we relate priesthood with the One God in Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In a truly patristic understanding, both Christology and Pneumatology are always placed in their Trinitarian context.

Pseudo-Dionysius had the Trinitarian dimension and perspective of priesthood in mind when he declared that "the source" of the ecclesiastical hierarchy "is the font of life, the being of goodness, the one cause of everything, namely, the Trinity which in goodness bestows being and well-being on everything"⁶. The same notion is stressed by St. Maximus the Confessor who points out that "the true priesthood is a type in all respects of the blessed divinity"⁷. Earlier St. Ignatius of Antioch recommended to the Trallians to "respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of Apostles"⁸. In a spurious treatise, attributed to St. Athanasius, a discussion is developed between an Orthodox and an Anomoean heretic on the issue: "the bishop, the

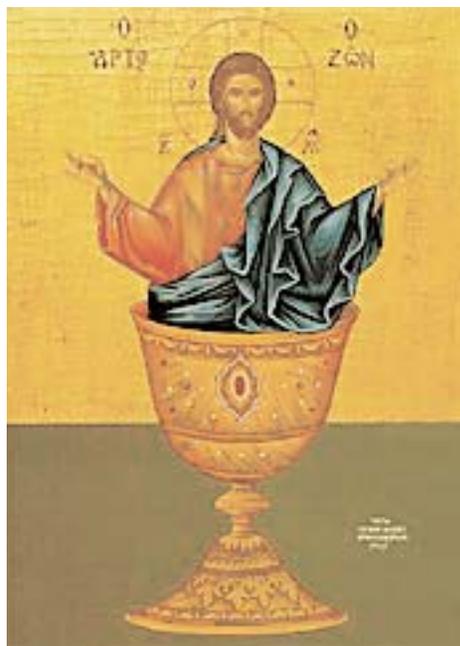
presbyter and the deacon, like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"⁹. We find a similar typology later, in the liturgical writings of St. Symeon of Thessalonica. There, Christian priesthood is called "divine", a definition parallel to that of St. Gregory of Nyssa who described priesthood as "divine matter" (theion chrema)¹⁰. St. Symeon following and quoting Pseudo-Dionysius says that "*in the type of the Trinity we have three, the deacon, the presbyter and the bishop*"¹¹.

4. The Trinitarian foundation of priestly order reveals and emphasizes not only the divine origin of the Christian priesthood, but equally its communal character. If the communion of the three divine persons, that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, is the communion par excellence, and if priesthood in its threefold aspect, bishop, presbyter, deacon, is an image and a type of the Holy Trinity, then, consequently, the priestly diakonia is an event of communion. Priesthood, in its essence, is a communal reality. It is a way of communion with God. It is as well an inter-communion of Church ministry and a syndiakonia between the three ranks of the ordained priesthood.

*every individual priest
accepts a unique commission*

The priestly diakonia, as a sacramental consecration, is not an abstract appointment, but a concrete ministry deeply bound to the very being of the ecclesial communion. Through ordination, every individual priest accepts a unique

commission to serve a particular community. His mission is inseparably related to and destined for a concrete ecclesial body. In the canonical tradition of the Eastern Church, it is prohibited to ordain a person “in abstracto,” in a general sense. An ordination without a specific appointment is not acceptable. The ordained person should always be associated with a parish, with a concrete Christian community. The sixth canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon is absolutely clear: *“No one should be ordained without a concrete appointment: neither presbyter, nor deacon nor any other in the ecclesiastical rank. The ordained must be designated to serve in a concrete ecclesial community of a city or of a village or of a martyr’s sanctuary or of a monastery. The Holy Council has ordered that an ordination without a concrete appointment should be void and the person ordained should not have the right to serve anywhere. This punishment should be understood also as a disapproval of the bishop who ordained him”.*



The same is true of the bishops. The assignment to a particular episcopal ministry is the *sine qua non* condition for ordination. The bishop, priest and deacon should be related to a concrete diocese, or congregation. This spiritual relationship is a kind of matrimonial connection. In order to guarantee this unique communion between the ordained and his faithful the First Ecumenical Council in its fifteenth rule declared a direct prohibition for all clergy to move from one place to another. Neither a bishop, nor a priest nor a deacon has the right to leave his place and go elsewhere.

***the “axios”, expresses
the approval of the
ecclesia as a whole***

Speaking of priesthood as a diakonia within the concrete ecclesial community we should underline the communal character of the ordination service itself. In any circumstance, secret ordination is absolutely unacceptable¹². The ordination is always an ecclesial praxis: a spiritual action realized within the body of the Christian community; it is open and public, before the community and together with the community. It is not performed by the bishop or the bishops alone, but by the bishop or the bishops, together with the other clergy and the congregation. In the Eastern ordination rite the “axios”, the “Kyrie eleison” and the “amen”, pronounced by the entire community, is not mere ceremonial, but rather a

responsible testimony and a way of expressing the approval of the ecclesia as a whole. This ecclesial approval is shown in a direct way by the exclamation pronounced by the deacon, both to the bishop and to the congregation, before the ordination ceremony begins: “give the command” (keleuson, keleusate). These exclamations have deep ecclesiological significance: this means that an ordination is performed by the bishop (or bishops) together with the entire people of God. The bishop is not acting alone, but as the person who has the sacramental gift and responsibility to ordain within and together with the Christian community. He is the person charismatically appointed to safeguard the unity of the Church, connecting, by what we call Apostolic Succession, the present with the initial fulfillment.

The canonical tradition of Eastern Christianity and the patristic sources are full of evidence indicating that all ordinations are inseparably connected with a given community, and through this concrete community with the catholic ecclesial body. In approaching the ordination of a bishop from this perspective, we can infer that the participation of at least three bishops has substantial ecclesiological meaning. The fourth canon of the First Ecumenical Council stipulates that the ordination of a bishop should be performed by all the bishops of the district, and if this is not possible because of practical difficulties, by at least

three of them. Every bishop taking part in the ordination of the new one is the representative and living presence of his entire flock; and all of them are a visible image of the Catholic Church. Thus, the new bishop who is appointed to serve in a concrete diocese, through his ordination, is related with the whole Church. The ordination of a bishop does not simply convey to the newly ordained juridical privileges, but elevates him to the relational rank of a catholic person and places him in the midst of the community as a living image and testimony of the ecclesial unity.

the Risen Lord is present in the eucharistic community

The same is applicable for the ordination of a priest. Through his ordination the new presbyter is existentially related, in a unique and specific way, to the entire Body of the Church, thus becoming himself an instrument of ecclesial unity. This means that the ordination of a presbyter is not an isolated sacramental action, in itself and for itself, but a sacramental and spiritual event related to a concrete community and through it to the life of the whole Church. If we maintain that the Risen Lord is present in the eucharistic community through the power of the Holy Spirit, and if we profess, as we have already done, that the presbyter through his ordination is directly connected with the priesthood of Christ by that same Spirit, then we can assert that the ordained person receiving the priesthood within

the community and being a member of the Christian community, has the vocation and commission to serve, in cooperation with Christ and the community, for the establishment of the kingdom of God in the entire world. Thus, the diakonia of priesthood is not limited to or exhausted by the given community, but in its eucharistic dimension it is extended to the entire Christian body. Every priest becomes, through his ordination and the offering of the eucharistic sacrifice, a catholic person.

all believers are united together in the one sacred relationship to Christ

5. Both the bishop and the presbyter, as celebrants of the holy Eucharist, are the builders of ecclesial unity. It is there, in the eucharistic bond, that all believers are united together in the one sacred relationship to Christ, the living Lord. In the Eucharist, the people of God are in a constant, personal and at the same time, communal relationship with Christ, the risen Lord. It is no accident that all ordinations, already from early Christian times, are liturgically and theologically inseparable from the eucharistic liturgy. The fact that the eucharistic gathering is the unique and exclusive locus for all ministerial consecrations means that the priesthood belongs to the eucharistic community. The priesthood is given for the community and because of this, every consecration is realized within

the context of the eucharistic assembly. It is the reality of the people of God, gathered together in eucharistic communion, that constitutes the basis for the existence of the priestly ministry. Priesthood is given for the Church and within the Church.

The implications of this perspective are of paramount importance for both a theology of priesthood and an understanding of its role for ecclesial unity. The first point to firmly stress once more is that the priesthood cannot exist as such apart from the Christian community. Priesthood is not an authority or a power above the community, nor a function or an office parallel or outside it. The priesthood is intrinsically related to the eucharistic sacrifice, that central, empowering event that is the source of the Church's unity. This means that the local community finds its unity in the priest, in the sense that through him it forms a eucharistic body, sacramentally linked and canonically united to the catholic fullness of the Church. Through the charisma given to the ordained person, ecclesial unity and catholicity is realized in a concrete place as participation in the eucharistic liturgy. Thus, priesthood exists as a charisma that belongs not to an individual, but to a person in community who is dedicated to serve the community. The words of Christ, addressed to His disciples, are significant and clearly describe priestly service. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise

authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life a ransom for many' (Matthew 20: 25-28. Mark 10: 42-45.)

In his ordination the priest or bishop receives a gift and responsibility of a different level and order. One has to evaluate this power in light of the eucharistic gathering. In fact we cannot think of a gift "possessed individually"¹³, nor of a juridical authority within the ecclesial body, but of a charismatic ministry belonging to all the people of God. One can talk of a divine economy, of a ministry which has catholic consequences and which ministers in the eucharistic synaxis as a force transforming the entire community into "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Although the priesthood elevates the community to the level of "a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9), it is the community that has always been the basis of priesthood.

6. In the Apology of the monk Leontios of Jerusalem, which was appended to the Acts of the Fourth Ecumenical Council¹⁴, we find an unusual and interesting narration that illustrates our discussion. A mime actor of the theater accused of subversive activity and homicide, fled his homeland in order to avoid arrest and judgement,



retreating to the desert in a foreign land. After some time there, he once more met adversity, this time being captured a hostage by certain Saracen Christians. These Christians, reckoning he was a priest because of his external appearance, demanded that he celebrate for them the Holy Eucharist. His attempts to persuade his captors otherwise, were judged to be pious acts of humility prevalent among the holy ascetics. Not succeeding in convincing them he gave in to their obstinate demands and agreed to perform the ritual. At his instructions, they built together an altar table out of wood and straw, setting over it a woven cloth and on this they placed the bread and wine in a wooden cup. The imprisoned actor sealed the gifts with the sign and looking up to heaven, glorified the Holy Trinity. This was the only thing he did. After that he broke the bread and gave it to the Christians, taking the wooden vessel he gave them wine from the cup. Upon finishing the believers took with devotion the altar cloth and the cup leaving behind

only the altar. Just as they were leaving the place of worship, fire fell from heaven and burned the altar without touching or harming any of the faithful and yet consuming the altar entirely, leaving nothing remaining of it, not even ashes. Beholding this awesome and frightening sign, the grateful Christians wanted to recompense the one whom they thought to be a priest and asked him what he desired. He responded that the only thing he wanted was for him and those with him to be set free; the Saracen Christians set them free.

7. Leontios of Jerusalem is not discussing eucharistic theology in his Apology. His intention was rather to expose the heresies of Nestorianism and Monophysitism and the possibility of miracles both in the Orthodox Church and in circles of schismatics and heretics. At any rate, the reference to Eucharist and priesthood it seems to me is useful for our discussion.

First of all, we observe that for the Christians in this narrative, priesthood has been understood as an undoubted necessary condition for their communal constitution. As a Christian group, as a small ecclesial community, they could not exist other than in the fellowship with him who has the gift and the power of sacramental action. It is through the priesthood that the Holy Spirit abides in their fraternal gathering, transfiguring it to a pentecostal body. Although the person chosen to celebrate the Eucharist was not in fact an ordained one, the Saracen

Christians took it for granted that he was a priest. There was no doubt among them that their community is fulfilled and integrated through the priestly ministry. Their communal being was precisely transformed into an ecclesial being through and in priesthood.

Eucharist...outflows from the community itself.

The second point we have to stress is that for the people in the narrative of Leontius, the Eucharist was considered as an indispensable necessity for their spiritual being, as a sacrament decisive for their ecclesial existence. Obviously, Eucharist here is not seen as an objectified ritual, disassociated from their corporate identity, but flows from the community itself. Indeed, Eucharist needs to be apprehended as a gift related to the community, both to the minister and the "laos". Nicholas Cabasilas says that the Eucharist is a command of Christ "to the Apostles and through the Apostles to the whole Church"¹⁵. In this sense Eucharist is not an action of an ordained individual but that of a community, i.e., performed by the priest together with the people. The Eucharist is a liturgical praxis; liturgical with the etymological meaning of the term (ergon laou), work of the people, not of one single minister isolated from the ecclesial community. In the final analysis the One who acts in the Eucharist is Christ Himself, through the priest and the community, building up His Body in this way.

8. This kind of approach leads us to point out that the priest does not possess in himself an indelible mark, as if it were a magical seal that grants him a private efficacy to perform the Eucharist or any other liturgical action, apart from the ecclesial body. The priestly ministry is rather a charismatic gift to serve and edify the body of the Church. It is a permanent rank of service only in union with and by the discerning authority of the Church.

priestly ministry is a charismatic gift to serve and edify the Church

The doctrine of the "indelible mark" attained at ordination to the priesthood seems to have originated in the Scholastic period of the Western Church. This same concept was, at times, borrowed by Eastern theologians thereafter to describe the priesthood. The teaching purports that the grace of ordination leaves an indelible and irrevocable mark upon the soul of the ordained individual that sets him apart for priestly service analogous to the Levite rank and the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek in the Old Testament. It is interesting to mention here that the Sixth Ecumenical Council, in its 33rd canon, condemns the practice of Armenian Christians who had embraced the Old Testament custom concerning the Levitical rank and did not accept for the priesthood anyone who was not of this so called "priestly lineage". The reasoning for the adoption of

the Old Testament typology in both cases seems to be that an identifying mark is a constitutive element of priesthood. In the later case it is conceived as an inherited trait, while in the former which concerns us here, it is viewed as irrevocably and individually given at the rite of ordination. The logical conclusion of the "indelible mark" is that the ordained individual forever possesses this peculiar mark of priesthood that can never be removed by anyone, nor can it be surrendered in any circumstance. Such a doctrinal concept absolutizes and isolates the priesthood from the event of ecclesial communion. Priesthood here is distorted, objectified and over-estimated, assuming a totalitarian magnitude. It is imposed over the Church that is unable to deprive the ordained individual of its characteristic mark, even if he is unworthy to maintain the ecclesial grace. In fact, this doctrine concerning the "indelible mark" of the priesthood divorces the priesthood from its organic context of ecclesial life. Thus the ordained person possesses a self-sufficient power that is higher than the Church itself and the Church is not able to take back the "indelible mark" from an individual even if he is defrocked and excommunicated.

Interpreting the 68th Apostolic Canon that refers to the impossibility of repeating the sacrament of ordination¹⁶, St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain explains that ordination cannot be repeated because it is done according to the typos of the First and Great

High Priest who entered once and for all into the holy of holies and there granted eternal salvation. Yet, he unswervingly rejects the doctrine of the “indelible mark” of priesthood and attests that it is the “invention of scholastics”¹⁷. Nevertheless, according to St. Nicodemos, the doctrine is borrowed from the West by Nicholas Bulgaris, Koresios and many other theologians of the 18th century and some still adhere to it today.

Despite the fact that the indelible mark theory acquired dogmatic formulation in the Council of Trent¹⁸, in most circles of the Roman Catholic Church, after the Second Vatican Council, the foundational framework of efficient causality and *ex opere operato*, which gave rise to such an understanding of priesthood, is reckoned as belonging to a bygone age and abandoned for a more dynamic and ecclesiological approach to the sacrament¹⁹.

It should be mentioned in this connection that, as far as we know, no evidence concerning the “indelible mark theory” is found in the teaching of the Fathers. On the contrary, the canonical data leave no doubt that a defrocked priest or bishop, after the decision of the Church to take back his priesthood, returns to the rank of the laity. Anathematized or defrocked clergy are in no way considered to maintain their priesthood. The canonical tradition that in the case of his ministerial rehabilitation this person is not re-ordained does not imply any recognition that he was a priest during the period of his punishment²⁰. It simply means that the Church recognizes that which had been sacramentally

performed and the grace of ecclesiastical ministry is restored upon his assignment to an ecclesial community with no other sacramental sign or rite.

9. In the light of what has been said thus far, we may conclude saying that priesthood in no way is a ministry introducing division or classification within the ecclesial body. Between a priest and a lay person there is no legal distinction but precisely what we may call charismatic distribution. As we read in I Corinthians 12: 4-6: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministry but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all”. This means that through ordination a member of the Church is set apart in order to minister the sacrament of ecclesial unity. In the patristic tradition, priesthood is never understood as an office based on an objectified mark imprinted on the soul of the ordained person, but rather as an ecclesial gift, as a vocation whose aim is to build up the Body of Christ. It has been rightly said that an Orthodox understanding of priesthood is beyond any “ontological” or “functional” definition²¹.

Priesthood cannot be considered in itself and for itself, but is rather a relational reality. In other words, the only way to have an adequate understanding of the priestly charisma is to see it in its anaphoral dimension and in connection to the ecclesial communion of which it is a part.

—Professor Constantine Scouteris
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NOTES

1. J. ZIZIOULAS, *L'etre ecclesial*, Geneve 1981,171.
2. Cf. Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 9: "... Christon Iesoun, ton prototokon kai monon te physei tou Patros archiereia".
3. Cf. Justin, *Dialogus* 42,1: "... apo tes dynameos tou aioniou hiereos Christou".
4. N. NISSIOTIS, *The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology, The Orthodox Ethos*, Oxford 1964, 39.
5. G. FLOROVSKY, *The Sacrament of Pentecost, Creation and Redemption*, Belmont 1976, 190.
6. Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (PG 3, 373C).
7. Maximus the Confessor, *Epist. ad Joannem episcopum* (PG 91, 625A): "... he alethes hier osyne charakter esti dia panton tes makarias theotetos".
8. Ignatius of Antioch, *Trall.* 3,1. See also *Magn.*, 6,1.
9. Athanasius, *Dialogue on the Holy Trinity* 27 (PG 28,1156 ff).
10. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Vita Moysis II* (H. MUSURILLO ed.,130,15-16; PG 44, 417B).
11. Symeon, *De Sacris Ordinationibus* CLV (PG 155, 364A).
12. See FLOROVSKY, *op. cit.* 192.
13. J. ZIZIOULAS, *op. cit.*,164.
14. J.D. MANSI, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Vol 7, Graz 1960 (repr.), 8, 821.824.
15. Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* 28.
16. See also Canon 48 of Council of Carthage.
17. "... Hoi scholastikoi tegoun dioti aphinoun kai typonoun auta charaktera anexaleipton, hos tis kat' autous poiotes pragmatike enyparchousa te psyche kai dynamis hyperphyes" (The *Pedalion*, Athens 1970, 90). "Ho para ton scholastikon epinoethis charakter ..." (Ibid.).
18. Canon 4: "Si quis dixerit, per sacram ordinationem non dari Spiritum sanctum, ac proinde frustra episcopos dicere: Accipe Spiritum Sanctum; aut per eam non imprimi characterem; vel eum, qui sacerdos semel fuit, laicum rursus fieri posse, anathema sit".
19. See for example B. COOKE, *Ministry to the Word and Sacraments. History and Theology*, Philadelphia 1978 (Third printing), 187 ff. T. O'MEARA, *Orders and Ordination*, in: *The New Dictionary of Theology*, 725-726.
20. ZIZIOULAS, *op. cit.*, 233.
21. ZIZIOULAS, *op. cit.*, 226-227.



The Priesthood

Contemporary and Classic Excerpts

You should rejoice and be glad, reverend and holy priest, because God has granted you the holy sanctuary where the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ is located. Priests are even higher than angels and kings. This is how my mind tells me, my brethren, to act. If I were to meet a priest and a king, I would put the priest to sit higher than the king. If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would first greet the priest and then the angel. But, if you wish to become a priest so you can take it easy, or for the glory, or through illegal means, God will cut your life short and your soul will go to hell where you will burn forever.

I beg you, holy priests, and I counsel you: concern yourselves with the laity, how they - and you - are going to be saved. I say this: whoever wishes to become a priest should be as pure as an angel. He should be educated so he can explain the holy gospel and the sacred Scriptures. He should observe who is angry with his wife, which brother with his brother, which neighbor with his neighbor, and reconcile them. He should sacrifice himself for his flock.

If, on the other hand, he is unworthy, uneducated, infected with sins, pays money and uses intermediaries to become a priest, he buys hell. Woe to the priest who reads the Gospel

and then tells lies! In olden times, when people wanted to curse someone, they swore and said, "May God place him among the priests of the 18th century!" This is why, my brethren, it is difficult today for patriarchs, bishops and priests to be saved. This is why I advise you holy priests: now that you have time, repent so you may be saved.

Priests shouldn't be obstinate. They shouldn't give an ear to accusations. They shouldn't cause scandals or act as witnesses in every affair. They should be humble and prudent. They shouldn't pronounce anathemas or become enraged, or curse, or hate, or get drunk, but be as bright as the rays of the sun.

Perfect love is to sell all your possessions and to give alms and even to sell yourself as a slave, and whatever you get to give in alms. In the East there was a bishop from whose province a hundred slaves were taken captive. He sold all of his possessions and ransomed them. Only the child of a widow remained. What did the bishop do? He shaved off his beard and begged the master who held the child to free her and keep him in his place. And so it happened. The bishop lived a life of great hardship, but because of his patience God found him worthy of performing miracles. Later his master freed him and he returned to his episcopal duties.

It is this kind of love God wants us to have! Is there anyone here who has this kind of love? No! Don't sell yourself, sell only your possessions and give alms. You can't do this? Give half, a third, a fourth! You can't even do this? Then don't take your brother's bread, don't persecute him and don't slander him.

—St. Kosmas Aitolos (1714-1779)



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This issue of The Presbyter was sponsored by the Clergy Brotherhood of the Metropolis of Chicago.

The Presbyter

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Omaha, NE 68105-2712

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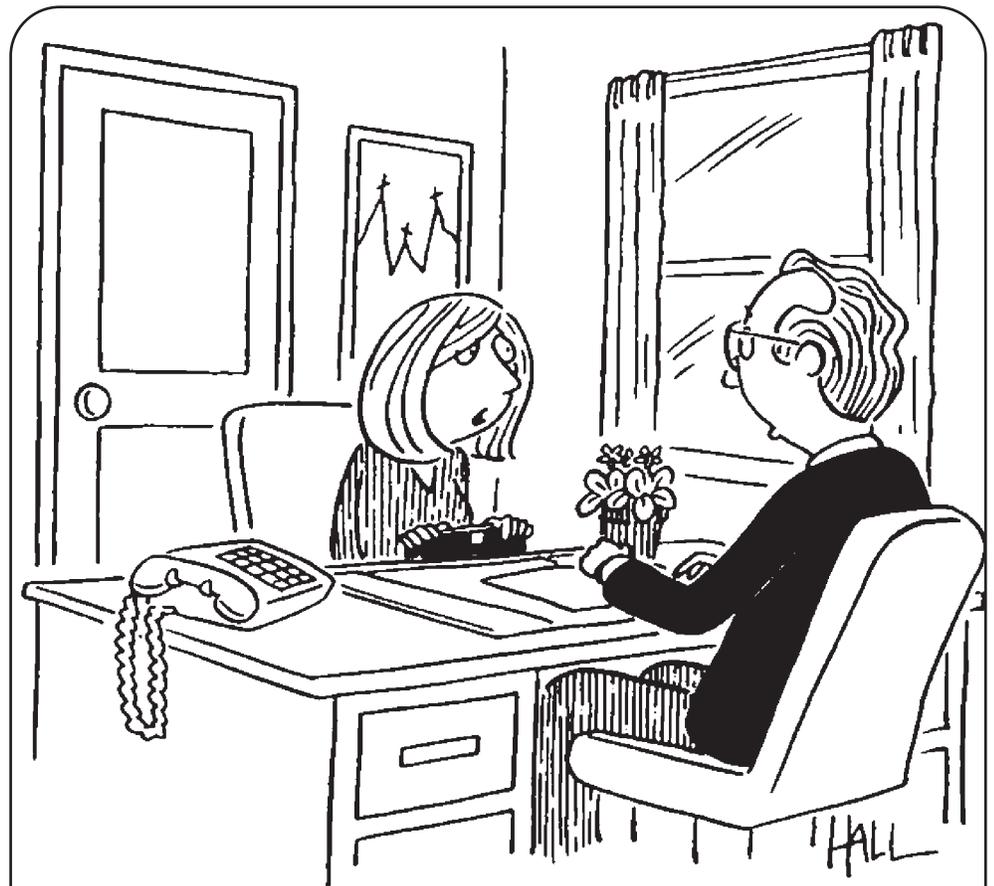
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