



in directing the faithful to pray through the litanies that recur in most services. The deacon may not perform any of the Mysteries of the church (consecration of the Gifts, baptism, confession, etc.).

To be ordained a deacon, a candidate must first be tonsured a reader and then ordained a subdeacon; both of these events take place immediately before Liturgy begins. The tonsuring of the reader consists of having the candidate read a randomly selected passage from the Epistles in order to demonstrate that he can adequately read according to the order of the Church. The candidate's hair is sheared just as in baptism: crosswise. The reader is then ordained a subdeacon also by the Laying-on of Hands in the nave of the Church. The new subdeacon stands before the icons of, first, Christ and then the Theotokos (literally, "Birth-giver of God") for most of the Liturgy, holding a pitcher of water and bowl with a towel draped over his head, waiting to wash the bishop's hands during the Cherubic hymn and contemplating the life of service in Christ's Church that the Holy Orders require.

The ordination to the diaconate takes place within the Divine Liturgy. Because the deacon may not perform the Mysteries, it occurs *after* the Anaphora (when the Gifts are consecrated). Immediately preceding the Litany Before the Lord's Prayer, the candidate is escorted by clergy from the nave to the Royal Doors. As he approaches the Royal Doors, the candidate is forced to the ground in a prostration three times. Once in the Altar, the candidate is led around the Holy Table three times. The three hymns that are sung while he is making this triple circuit are symbolic: the martyrs are invoked first because they provide an example of faith and purity, the second represents the subject of the candidate's teaching, the Holy Trinity, and the third proclaims that the foundation of the priesthood and the Church was the coming of the Savior, who is magnified whenever the Virgin is blessed. During each circuit he kisses each corner of the Holy Table and the hand, knee, and palitza (shield) of the bishop.

After this, he kneels on his right knee before the Holy Table (kneeling on only one knee signifies that the fullness of the sacred ministry is not conferred upon the deacon; when a priest is ordained, he kneels with both knees). The Bishop places his omophorion on the candidate's head and then lays his hands on him, praying the prayer of ordination. Part of the prayer reads: "Do Thou, O Master of all, fill this Thy servant, whom Thou hast made worthy to enter upon the ministry of a Deacon, with all faith, and love, and power, and holiness, through the infusion of Thy Holy and Life-giving Spirit (for it is not by the laying-on of my hands, but by the visitation of Thy rich compassions, that grace is given unto them that are worthy of Thee), that he, being without any sin, may stand blameless before Thee in the terrible day of Thy judgment, and may receive the unfailling reward of Thy promise." The bishop then vests the new deacon in the Royal Doors, facing the congregation. When he presents the deacon with his orarion, and each cuff, he asks the congregation, "*axios?*", which means, is the candidate worthy? The congregation, if they believe that the candidate is worthy of the office, respond, "*Axios!*"



*The bishop's Saccos (robe) & Omophorion (stole)*

## ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE



A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE ORDINATION SERVICE, ESPECIALLY AS IT OCCURS ON THIS FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

14/27 SEPTEMBER 2009  
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
EUGENE, OREGON



*The divine grace, which always heals that which is infirm, and supplies that which is lacking, ordains, \_\_\_\_\_, the most-pious Subdeacon to be a Deacon. Therefore, let us pray for him, that the grace of the All-holy Spirit may come upon him.*

✠Part of the prayer of the Laying-on of Hands said during ordination

Today we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate this Liturgy, which culminates in the faithful communing the Body and Blood of our Lord, every Sunday and every Feast day of the Church. On this day, the Liturgy is special for three reasons:

- 1) Today is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church: The Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.
- 2) Today our hierarch, His Grace Bishop MAXIM, is present with us. This means that the Divine Liturgy is a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, resulting in an even richer liturgical expression of the fullness of the Church because the Bishop, who is the head of the local church and icon of Christ, is amidst us.
- 3) Today His Grace will ordain Daniel Mackay to the diaconate. This will be the first ordination to take place at St. John the Wonderworker.

### THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

This Great Feast commemorates two events: 1) St. Helena's (mother of the Emperor St. Constantine) finding of the Precious Cross on which Christ was crucified, and 2) the freedom of this Cross from captivity with the Persians by the Greek Emperor Heraclius.

Because the finding of the Cross of Christ is a triumph of the Faith, which was guarded by emperors in both the Byzantine Empire and that of Tsarist Russia, the unique hymns of this Feast principally contain prayers for the pious Emperor and for the Christian people: "Save, O Lord, Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; grant Thou unto the faithful victory over adversaries. And by the power of Thy Cross do Thou preserve Thy commonwealth" (Troparion of the Cross). Generally, because of the celebration of the Lord's resurrection on Sundays, prostrations and fasting do not occur on Sunday. However, in order to remind Christians to follow Christ on the path of self-denial and suffering that the cross represents, both prostrations before the cross and fasting are called for on this day.

### THE HIERARCHICAL LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy can be divided into three parts: 1) The Proskomedia, 2) The Liturgy of the Catechumens, and 3) The Liturgy of the Faithful.

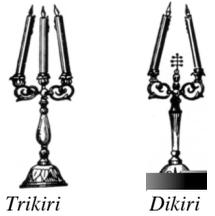


The *Proskomedia* (Greek for 'offering') takes place in relative silence (before the bells ring or choir sings) behind the *iconostasis* ('icon screen') in an area reserved for the clergy called the Altar. During the Proskomedia, the Lamb—the bread that will become the Body of Christ—is prepared for consecration. The Liturgy of the Catechumens culminates with the reading of the Gospel and Homily. The Liturgy of the Faithful culminates in baptized Orthodox Christian who have prepared through fasting and confession communing the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

The visit of a bishop to a local parish is a time of celebration and festivity. In 107 AD, St Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, wrote: "The bishop in each Church presides in place of God... Let no one do any of the things which concern the Church without the bishop ... Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." The primary and distinctive task of the bishop is to celebrate the Eucharist, "the medicine of immortality."

Most of the additions to the *Hierarchical Liturgy* (Divine Liturgy with a bishop serving) are elaborations that manifest the bishop's role as the chief shepherd of the flock; the majority of these elaborations occur during the Liturgy of the Catechumens. You will want to be present well before Liturgy begins because the rubrics call for a special greeting of the bishop outside the church. Unlike the priest, who begins the Liturgy in the Altar, the bishop will not enter the Altar until the Small Entrance, when he follows the Gospel into the holy place. As a consequence, the bishop vests in the nave of the church for all to see. On the other hand, note how the Bishop remains in the Altar during the Great Entrance when the clergy present the Gifts to him from the nave.

The candles with which the bishop blesses the people represent the light of Christ. The one in His Grace's right hand is the *trikiri*: its three candles represent the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The candle in his left hand is the *dikiri*: its two candles represent the two natures of Christ: The Divine and the mortal. When we sing "Eis polla eti despota" to the bishop, it means "Many years, master!"



### THE ORDINATION

Ordination to the Holy Orders of clerical office within the Church is one of the Mysteries of the Church (these Mysteries are called *sacraments* in the West). Ordination was instituted by Christ on Pentecost; the tradition of laying hands on the candidate to bestow God's grace on them is spoken of by St. Paul when he addressed his disciple St. Timothy: "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (II Tim. 1:6). The major ranks of clergy are deacon, priest, and bishop. The two minor ranks of clergy are reader and subdeacon. The deacon (which literally means "servant") receives the grace of Our Lord in order to assist the priest and bishop with the ministering of the sacraments and to lead the laity in prayers, chiefly through his role