

PAUL VI
APOSTOLIC LETTER IN THE FORM OF MOTU PROPRIO
MINISTERIA QUAEDAM
WITH WHICH
IN THE LATIN CHURCH
THE DISCIPLINE CONCERNING THE FIRST TONSURE,
THE MINOR ORDERS AND THE SUBDIACONATE IS

Since ancient times, certain ministries were established by the Church with the aim of duly offering sacred worship to God and offering, according to need, a service to the people of God. With them, offices of liturgical and charitable character depending on the various circumstances. The conferral of these offices often took place through a particular rite, with which the faithful, having obtained God's blessing, were constituted in a special class or grade to fulfill a specific ecclesiastical function.

Some of these offices, more closely connected with the liturgical action, were gradually considered as prior institutions for receiving sacred orders, so that the Ostiariate, the Lectorate, the Exorcist and the Acolyte, in the Latin Church, they were called minor orders in relation to the Subdiaconate, the Diaconate and the Presbyterate, which were called major orders and, although not everywhere, were generally reserved for those who, precisely through the minor orders, ascended to the Priesthood.

However, since the minor orders have not always remained the same and numerous offices connected to them, as also happens today, have also been exercised by lay people, it seems appropriate to review this practice and adapt it to today's needs, so that the elements that have fallen out of use in those ministries, be eliminated; those that prove useful, are retained; those that are necessary, let them be defined; and, at the same time, let it be established what must be required of candidates for sacred orders.

During the preparation of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, quite a few pastors of the Church requested the revision of the minor orders and the Subdiaconate. The Council, then, although it established nothing for the Latin Church on this matter, enunciated some guiding principles to resolve the question, and there is no doubt that the conciliar norms, concerning the general and orderly reform of the liturgy (Cf CONC. VAT. II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 62 AAS 56 (1964), p. 117; cf. also n. 21: *lc*, pp. 105-106), also include everything that concerns the ministries in the liturgical assembly, of so that from the very unfolding of the celebration the Church appears constituted in its various orders and ministries (Cf *Ordo Missae, Institutio generalis Missalis Romani*, n. 58, ed. typ. 1969, p. 29). For this reason, the Second Vatican Council established that *in liturgical celebrations each person, whether minister or simple believer, carrying out his own office, limits himself*

to carrying out everything and only that which, according to the nature of the rite and the liturgical norms, is within his competence (Const. on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium , n. 28: AAS 56 (1964), p. 107).

This statement is closely linked to what is written shortly before in the same Constitution: *It is the ardent desire of Mother Church that all the faithful are trained in full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations, which is required by the very nature of the Liturgy and to which the Christian people « chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, people of purchase" (1 Pt 2, 9; cf 2, 4-5), has a right and duty by virtue of Baptism. Very special care must be dedicated to this full and active participation of all the people within the framework of the reform and increase of the Liturgy: it is in fact the first and indispensable source from which the faithful can draw the genuine Christian spirit, and therefore the pastors must strive to obtain it through adequate training (Ibid ., n. 14; lc , p. 104).*

In the particular offices to be maintained and adapted to today's needs, we find elements which, in a special way, are closely connected with the ministries of the Word and the Altar, and which, in the Latin Church, are called the Lector, the Acolyte and the Subdiaconate. It is appropriate that these are maintained and adapted in such a way that, from today onwards, there are two offices: that of the *Reader* and that of the *Acolyte* , which also include the functions of the Subdeacon.

In addition to these common offices of the Latin Church, nothing prevents the Episcopal Conferences from requesting others from the Apostolic See, if they judge, for particular reasons, the institution to be necessary or very useful in their own region. Of this kind are, for example, the offices of *Host* , *Exorcist* and *Catechist* (Cf CONC. VAT. II, Decr. on the missionary activity of the Church *Ad Gentes Divinitus* , n. 15: AAS 58 (1966), p. 565; *ibid .*, n. 17; *lc .*, pp. 967-968), as well as other offices, to be entrusted to those involved in works of charity, if this ministry has not been conferred on Deacons.

Furthermore, it corresponds to the reality itself and to today's mentality that the aforementioned offices are no longer called minor orders and that their conferral is called not "ordination" but "institution", and also that only those who have received the Diaconate. In this way the distinction between clergy and lay people will stand out even better, between what is proper and reserved for the clerics and what can be entrusted to the lay faithful; thus their mutual relationship will appear more clearly, since *the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, although they differ essentially and not only in degree, are nevertheless ordered to each other, since the one and the other , each in their own way, participate in the one priesthood of Christ*(Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* s, 10: AAS 57 (1965), p. 14).

Therefore, having pondered every aspect of the question and requested the vote of the experts, after having consulted the Episcopal Conferences and taken into account the

opinions expressed by them, having heard the opinion of Our Venerable Brothers who are members of the competent Sacred Congregations, by virtue of Our authority Apostolic, we establish the following norms, derogating - if and to the extent necessary - from the prescriptions of the Code of Canon Law, currently in force, and we promulgate them with this Letter.

I. The First Tonsure is no longer conferred; entry into the clerical state is annexed to the diaconate.

II . What until now were called minor Orders will in the future have to be called "ministries".

III. Ministries can also be entrusted to lay people, so that they are no longer considered to be reserved for candidates for the sacrament of Orders.

IV. There are two ministries that must be maintained throughout the Latin Church, adapted to today's needs, that of the *Reader* and that of the *Acolyte* . The functions, which until now were entrusted to the Subdeacon, are delegated to the Lector and the Acolyte, and therefore, in the Latin Church, there is no longer the major order of the Subdeacon. However, nothing prevents that, in the opinion of the Episcopal Conference, the Acolyte, in some places, can also be called Subdeacon.

V. The Lector is established for the office proper to him of reading the word of God in the liturgical assembly. Therefore, in the Mass and in other sacred actions it is up to him to proclaim the readings of the Holy Scripture (but not the Gospel); in the absence of the psalmist. recite the intercessional psalm; when neither the Deacon nor the cantor are available, state the intentions of the universal prayer of the faithful; direct the singing and guide the participation of the faithful; instruct the faithful to worthily receive the Sacraments. He will also be able - if necessary - to take care of the preparation of the other faithful, who, on a temporary assignment, must read the Sacred Scripture in liturgical actions. In order to then fulfill these offices with greater dignity and perfection, try to meditate assiduously on the Sacred Scripture.

The Reader, feeling the responsibility of the office received, should make every effort and use the appropriate means to acquire more fully the sweet and living love every day (Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 24: AAS 56 (1964), p. 107: VAT. CONC. II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* , n. 25: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 829) and the knowledge of the Sacred Scripture, in order to become a more perfect disciple of the Lord.

YOU.The Acolyte is established to help the Deacon and to minister to the Priest. It is therefore his task to take care of the service of the altar, to help the Deacon and the Priest in the liturgical actions, especially in the celebration of the Holy Mass; furthermore, distribute, as an extraordinary minister, Holy Communion as many times as the ministers referred to in can. 845 of the CIC, are not there or cannot do so due to illness, advanced age or because they are prevented from carrying out another pastoral ministry, or whenever the number of faithful who approach the Holy Table is so high that the celebration of the Holy Mass would last too long. In the same extraordinary circumstances he may be responsible for publicly exposing the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist for adoration by the faithful and then placing it away; but not to bless the people. He may also - insofar as it is necessary - take care of the education of the other faithful, who, on a temporary assignment, help the Deacon and the priest in the liturgical actions by carrying the missal, the cross, the candles etc., or carrying out other similar offices . He will exercise these tasks all the more worthily if he participates in the Holy Eucharist with an ever more ardent piety, he will be nourished by it and he will acquire an ever deeper knowledge of it. they help the Deacon and the priest in liturgical actions by carrying the missal, the cross, candles, etc., or by carrying out other similar offices. He will exercise these tasks all the more worthily if he participates in the Holy Eucharist with an ever more ardent piety, he will be nourished by it and he will acquire an ever deeper knowledge of it. they help the Deacon and the priest in liturgical actions by carrying the missal, the cross, candles, etc., or by carrying out other similar offices. He will exercise these tasks all the more worthily if he participates in the Holy Eucharist with an ever more ardent piety, he will be nourished by it and he will acquire an ever deeper knowledge of it.

The Acolyte, destined in a special way for the service of the altar, learns all those notions that concern public divine worship and strives to understand its intimate and spiritual meaning: in this way he will be able to offer himself, every day, completely to God and be , in the temple, an example to all by his serious and respectful behavior, and also have a sincere love for the mystical body of Christ, or people of God, and especially for the weak and the sick.

VII. The institution of Lector and Acolyte, according to the venerable tradition of the Church, is reserved for men.

VIII. In order for someone to be admitted to the ministries, the following are required:

a) the application, freely filled out and signed by the aspirant, to be presented to the Ordinary (the Bishop, and in clerical institutes of perfection, the Major Superior), who is responsible for acceptance;

b) the appropriate age and special qualities, which must be determined by the Episcopal Conference;

c) the firm will to faithfully serve God and the Christian people.

IX. The ministries are conferred by the Ordinary (the Bishop and, in the clerical Institutes of perfection, the Major Superior) with the liturgical rite "institution of the Reader" and "institution of the Acolyte", recognized by the Apostolic See.

X. Between the conferment of the reader and that of the encolised, the interstices are respected, established by the Holy See or by the episcopal conferences, whenever the same people are conferred more than a ministry.

XI. Candidates for the Diaconate and the Priesthood must receive the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, if they have not already done so, and exercise them for a suitable period of time, so that they better prepare themselves for future services of the Word and the Altar. For the same candidates, dispensation from receiving ministries is reserved to the Holy See.

XII. The conferral of ministries does not give the right to support or remuneration from the Church.

XIII. The rite of the institution of the Lector and the Acolyte will be published shortly by the competent Dicastery of the Roman Curia.

The aforementioned regulations will come into force from 1 January 1973.

All that has been decreed by Us with this Motu proprio, we order that it has stable value, despite any contrary provision.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's, on 15 August 1972, the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the tenth year of Our Pontificate.

PAUL PP. YOU

Copyright © Dicastery for Communication - Libreria Editrice Vaticana