

The Deacon in the Orthodox Church

With increasing consideration being given to establishment of a permanent diaconate in the Roman Catholic Church it might be good to see how a centuries-old diaconate works. The Courier-Journal here publishes a brief discourse on the Orthodox diaconate.

By MARK DAVIDSON

Orthodox Christians have not let the office of deacon fall by the wayside, so we need not dwell upon the diaconate as it pertains to Orthodoxy. However, we should note that in the last decade or two, the Orthodox in America have begun to allow this, the first of the major orders, to become less and less important. Their attitude can best be explained by the scarcity of all vocations and by the fact that the diaconate is not as indispensable as the priesthood. By way of exception, I hasten to point out that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church often has as many as a dozen deacons attached to each parish church!

The Dictionary of Orthodox

Theology says this: "The deacon is the first of the three major orders of the holy Priesthood. The deacon must be a male found worthy to be consecrated to the service of the Church. If the candidate is to marry he must be married before he becomes a deacon, for after ordination to the diaconate a man may never marry. The word deacon comes from a Greek term (Diakonia) meaning 'to serve' or 'to minister,' and that is the primary function of the deacon: to assist the priest during the Divine Liturgy and in other church services. He can perform no sacraments by himself except baptism in case of necessity, as can all Orthodox (and Catholics) and can also administer Holy Communion to the faithful."

The deacon may carry out any additional duties assigned to him, such as administering the ordinary sacraments and giving blessings. The deacon wears a cassock, a sticharion (called a dalmatic by Western Catholics), and a long stole (the

orator) reaching from the front hem to the back hem of the sticharion. He should be addressed as "Father" — this is also true of those deacons awaiting eventual ordination to the priesthood — for his proper title is: the Reverend Father Deacon.

The Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic Bishops of Canada, whose church has not abundant vocations to the priesthood, have already accepted candidates for the permanent diaconate.

One cannot but hope that all Byzantine Catholics will return to the liturgical use of deacons because, as the expert Orientalist Donald Atwater says: "The services of a deacon are theoretically necessary to the correct celebration of the Byzantine Divine Liturgy, though in practice his place is often taken to a certain extent by a minor cleric or layman, but not, as in the Western Churches, by another priest vested as a deacon."

Apocryphal tradition mentions that Christ instituted the

diaconate. While this is not an historical certainty, we know from Sacred Scripture that there were deacons only a few years following the Resurrection, and that the deacon Stephen was the first Christian martyr. In the early Church deacons performed the numerous good deeds that characterized early Christianity. Their ministrations kept the priests and bishops from spending precious time engaging in charitable activities, thereby permitting them to concentrate on the preaching of the Gospel.

The work of the deacon is based upon the ministry which Christ performed for us and for all who believe in his name. This is a ministry of faithful love, from which springs diligent service. Though a priest must also have these virtues, the very reason for the existence of the diaconate is service to the people. When a deacon is in your presence, remember that he, like the priest, is a representative of the bishop. He is, in addition, another link with the Lord, who said: "I am among you as one who serves."



Brother Louis de Montfort, S.S.J., will make his final profession as Josephite this Sunday, April 13. A representative of the Josephite Community will witness his vows in a ceremony at Holy Rosary Church, Father Grant J. Higgins, S.S.J., will deliver the homily at a 5 p.m. Mass. Brother Louis is a graduate of Holy Rosary and of Aquinas Institute, class of 1962. He majored in history at

'I Do' Replaced with Full Vows

Rome — Marriage vows similar to those used in many English-language Protestant churches have been adopted for use by Roman Catholic couples in a revised edition of the marriage rite published here this week.

Instead of simply responding "yes" or "I do" to questions by the priest, Catholic brides and bridegrooms will now promise each other "fidelity in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and in health, to love and to honor you all the days of my life."

The Latin edition of the new rite becomes effective July 1.

Under the new rite, the priest prefaces the moment of the conferring of the sacrament with three questions establishing the freedom of the two to marry, their determination to be faithful to one another, and their purpose of educating offspring properly.

The amendments are in line with the liturgical reforms

decreed by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II on Dec. 4, 1963. "Where we have been able to adopt some lovely formulas that are used by other churches," the spokesman said, "we have happily done so as part of the expression of Christian brotherhood."

Aside from the exchange of vows, the new marriage rite also has the bride and bridegroom exchange rings, saying, in part, to each other, "take this ring, sign of my love and my fidelity."

In the new ceremony, however, it will be possible for the couple to choose among alternative formulas, skipping those that contain expressions that one partner cannot accept.

Other changes give individual hierarchies considerable latitude to adapt and include local or tribal usages in the marriage rite, and allow priests, who used to have to wait at the altar, to go to the church door to greet the wedding couple.

Festival Queen To Be Chosen

The Festival Queen for the 57th annual St. Anthony's Day celebration will be chosen Sunday, April 13, at Holy Cross Hall, Lake Avenue and Latta Road.

She will reign over the traditional observance June 14, highlighted by a parade from Charlotte High School to On-

tario Beach. More than 30,000 persons witnessed last year's parade.

Selection of the queen on April 13 will follow the annual parish spaghetti dinner, scheduled from 1 to 6 p.m. Joseph Marinucci, chairman, said judges of the 10 finalists will be from the Monroe County Harvest Queen festival.

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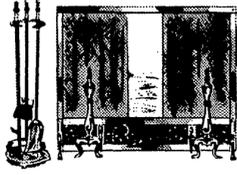
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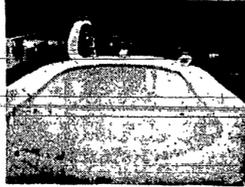
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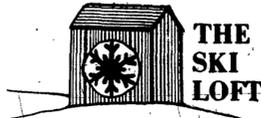
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