

Validity of Holy Orders

Because of the ignorant bloggers and critics, I need to point out a few facts:

The terms "valid" and "canonical" are not the same. Holy Orders can be valid but not canonical. The Roman Catholic church holds to indelibility of holy orders. Possession of the Apostolic Succession is key to validity. Validity in holy orders means this: the deacon, priest and bishop are really deacons, priests and bishops. Their ordinations are valid.

The Apostolic Succession is the historically traceable lineage of hands-on consecration to the Holy Apostles. Bishops ordain deacons and priests. Bishops act with other bishops to ordain other bishops.

If a Roman Catholic bishop is "fired" or dismissed by the pope, he still is a valid bishop for life. If he ordains deacons, priests or other bishops, they are valid, yet uncanonical. Even excommunication does not erase their holy orders. That is indelibility of holy orders and is Roman Catholic teaching.

We agree with this Roman Catholic teaching on indelibility. The Eastern Orthodox generally do not agree. We do not care about what the Eastern Orthodox say in this matter. In this regard, we follow the pope of Rome.

Indelibility of holy orders is widely accepted in the Western Orthodox churches. Another name for the Western rite Orthodox is "Orthodox Catholic"-- it is a denominational designation. (It may also be used to refer to all of the Orthodox worldwide.)

Some individuals think that the Orthodox are all uniform in canon and communion. This is not true. The Eastern Orthodox are not all in communion with the Oriental Orthodox. There is also a split within the Russian church and also separation with the Ukrainian Orthodox. They may call their opponents uncanonical.

The Old Catholics broke with Rome and are considered valid but uncanonical by Rome. Other breaks such as Roman Catholic bishop

Duarte Costa in Brazil and archbishop Marcel-François Lefebvre, the Latinist founder of the Society of Pius X. Demonstrate the Apostolic Succession and you prove validity of holy orders according to Roman Catholic teaching.

Our bishops have multiple lines of Apostolic Succession including schismatic Roman Catholic, Old Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Anglican as well as others. Our bishops and their consecrating prelates (bishops) and those before them are to be found in the books of the so-called "books of irregular bishops" that are known to scholars of the Apostolic Succession.

Even if a bishop breaks with any Church of the Apostolic Succession such as Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Moscow, etc. he is still validly consecrated for life and may pass on the Apostolic Succession along with other such bishops. Holy Orders are indelible. There are some who wish that this indelibility did not exist--but it does. We have valid Holy Orders and can prove it.

We are, technically speaking, "Western rite Orthodox"; this means that we are Orthodox yet using one of the Western rites for administration of the sacraments. As Orthodox we are in the true spiritual meaning of the phrase, part of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church" as referred to in the Creed used by all "Churches of the Apostolic Succession" since 381 AD.

The term "Western rite" indicates that Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Matrimony, Confession/Absolution, Confirmation and Holy Orders are performed in the Roman or Roman-derived rituals. The term Orthodox means "straight teaching" or "true teaching" and was first used simultaneously by Rome, Constantinople and the Ancient Churches with them after the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451AD.

The term "catholic" means "universal" and has been used along with the term "Orthodox" since ancient times. The term "catholic" has never been exclusively the property of the Church of Rome and its ecclesiastic governmental divisions.

Closing Notes

We are ecumenical and are happy to be affiliated with many Roman Catholics. We are unified in our service to Christ and charity. Our orders of chivalry and affiliations with other orders of knighthood are expressions of this ecumenism as all part of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

Blessings abundant,

+++David Leon Cooper

Metropolitan Archbishop

President and Secretariat Officer

The Spanish Orthodox Church EACS and Affiliated Jurisdiccions