



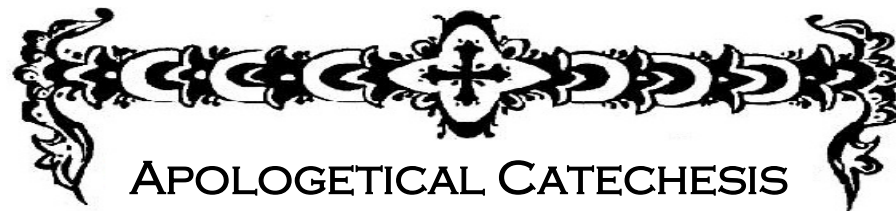
give the glad news that the kingdom of God was at hand. And so, as they preached the good news in places and cities and baptized those who accepted God's plan, they established those who were as their first fruits, after being tested in the Spirit, as bishops and deacons of those who were to believe. And this was not a new thing, for it had long been written about bishops and deacons. Indeed, Scripture says in one place, "I will establish their bishops (episkopoi) in righteousness, and their deacons (diakonoï) in the faith" (Isaiah 60:17). (Letter to the Corinthians 42).



"And also our apostles ... With perfect knowledge of what was going to happen, they established the men we have mentioned, and further provided that, when they died, other approved men should succeed them in the ministry..." (Ibid., 43).

St. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 110): "Follow the bishop, all of you, as Jesus Christ follows the Father, and the college of elders (presbyteroi) as the apostles. As for the deacons, reverence them as the commandment of God. Let no one without the bishop do anything that concerns the Church. Only that Eucharist is to be considered valid because it is made by the bishop or by the person authorized by him. Wherever the bishop appears, let the people go there, just as wherever Christ is, there is the universal Church."

"It is not licit to celebrate baptism or the Eucharist without the bishop. Whatever he approves, that is also what is pleasing to God, so that whatever you do may be firm and valid. He who honors the bishop is honored by God. He who does something in secret from the bishop worships the devil. Let all things be good for you..." (Letter to the people of Smyrna 8, 9, 10).

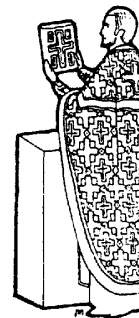


APOLOGETICAL CATECHESIS

DO WE NEED BISHOPS AND PRIESTS?

Christian groups that lack apostolic succession teach that the Apostles did not delegate their authority to special people. They believe that anyone can baptize or celebrate the Eucharist because Christ made everyone priests and ministers of the Gospel.

Even though not everyone believes the same thing, they do affirm that we do not need priests or bishops whose authority has been given by the Apostles.

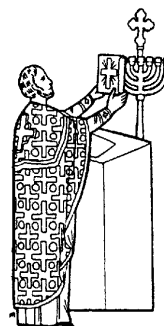


To be saved we need: To believe in Jesus Christ and obey His commandments, and to submit to what He has established. We must be baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit. We need to become members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, whose Head is Jesus Christ. We have to participate in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, present in the Eucharist. And in preparation for it, we must confess our sins and receive absolution.

Did Christ do anything so that believers could receive all this?

Did He authorize someone to do so?

The Lord instructed the Apostles to do so.



Only the Apostles were given authority to teach and baptize (Matthew 28:19-20).

Only the Apostles were given authority to anoint with the Holy Spirit (Acts).

Only the Apostles were given authority to add people to the Church (Acts).

Only the Apostles were commanded to celebrate the Eucharist until the Second Coming of Christ.

ORTHODOX ANSWERS 15





Only the Apostles received the power to forgive sins (John 20:22-23).

The book of Acts tells us that *no one except the Apostles* did these things.

What did the Apostles believe about themselves? Did they have authority or not?

Let's look at what the Apostles wrote about themselves:

- ♦ "Servant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1).
- ♦ "Servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1).
- ♦ "Ambassadors in the name of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).
- ♦ "We pray in the name of Christ" (ibid.).
- ♦ "His fellow workers" (2 Corinthians 6:1).
- ♦ "Ministers of God" (2 Corinthians 6:4).
- ♦ "Fathers" (1 Corinthians 4:15).
- ♦ "Preacher and Apostle" (1 Timothy 2:7).

And this authority **did not end** with the Apostles. Christ established the Church to the end of the world, and the authority He gave to the Apostles must continue until Christ returns so that the Church can do the work of

leading men to salvation. **What reason would there be to give an authority that would be immediately removed?** The Apostle Paul commissioned Titus to finish "**organizing what was lacking**" and... *to establish "presbyters in every city"* (Titus 1:5).

How did the Apostles continue the authority given to them by Christ?

The Apostles would choose someone and after prayer would lay their hands on him, as in the account of the seven deacons (Acts 6:6). This imposition granted the

gift of the Holy Spirit necessary to administer the Church.

"For this reason, I recommend to you that you revive the charism of God that is in you by the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).



To receive this gift, it was necessary to possess special qualities, which is why the Apostle warns Timothy: "*Do not be hasty in laying hands on anyone*" (1 Timothy 5:22).

It is clear that in order to receive authority in the Church, it is necessary for someone who possesses the authority of the Apostles to lay hands on us. **That is what the Bible and Tradition teach, and what the Church has practiced from the first century to the present.**

The Apostle Paul received his mission from Christ Himself, but he had to go to Ananias to lay hands on him and transmit to him the gift of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Apostles (Acts 9:17).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave authority to His Apostles and **MADE NO EXCEPTIONS FOR ANYONE**. In the face of these facts, we cannot understand how there are still people saying otherwise.

And the Apostles laid their hands on their successors: The Bishops of the Church. And these possess the authority to this day. It has been so since the first century and will continue until the coming of Christ.

Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, lay their hands on the priests and deacons of the Church and grant them the gift of the Holy Spirit which enables them to administer the mysteries of God.

This gift is not received by studying the Bible, or by going to a theological college. It is necessary to receive ordination from the hands of the successors of the Apostles in the bosom of the one Church of Christ.

What does the Tradition of the Church say?

St. Clement (A.D. 80) tells us: "*The apostles evangelized us from the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ was sent from God. Thus, Christ comes from God, and the apostles from Christ. Both things were done in an orderly manner by God's design. The apostles, after having been fully instructed, with the assurance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and believing in the word of God, went out, full of the assurance that the Holy Spirit gave them, to*

