

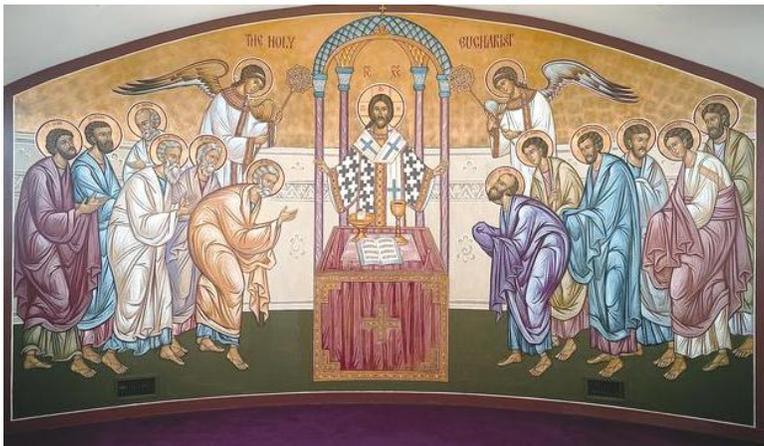
Duties of the Priest:

- **Public Worship** -the offering of incense twice daily (Ex.30:7), the weekly renewal of the loaves of proposition on the golden table (Lev.24:5-9), the cleaning and filling of the oil-lamps on the golden candlestick (Lev.24:1)
- **Outer Court** - the maintenance of the sacred fire on the altar for burnt sacrifices (Lev.6:9), the daily offering of the morning and evening sacrifices, especially of the lambs (Ex.29:38)
- **Community** - as subsidiary services the priests had to present the cursed water to wives suspected of adultery (Num.5:12-31), sound the trumpets announcing the holy-days (Num.10:1-5), declare the lepers clean or unclean (Lev.13-14; Deut.24:8), dispense from vows, appraise all objects vowed to the sanctuary (Lev.27).
- **Additional Responsibilities**- the priests furthermore were teachers and judges, explained the law to the people (Deut.33:10). They also settled difficult lawsuits among the people (Deut.17: 8).

Pause & Ponder

Does God always look for someone who has an immaculate soul and who is expert in God's wisdom to lead the people, think about references from the Old Testament and the New Testament? Do you expect a priest to be perfect in every aspect of his being and why?

Institution of Priesthood In New Testament Period



The sacrament of Priesthood was instituted by Christ. The Lord Jesus Himself chose and called His righteous apostles and He graduated them from His divine school. He further gave them the keys of knowledge to understand the essence of God's commandments and prohibitions. Also, He bestowed on them the power of teaching, edification, disciplining, justification and sanctification for the building of the Holy Body of Christ which is the Church. He gave authority to His disciples to administer the following:

- **Preach and Teach:** Spreading the word of God
- **Power of Healing:** heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons (Matthew 10:5-8)
- **Perform the Holy Eucharist:** Only to the selected did He give the mystery of His Holy Body and Precious Blood (Luke 22:14-20)
- **Authority of Absolution & Binding of sins:** Christ gives His apostles the Holy Spirit and the authority to forgive and not forgive sins (Matthew 18:18, John 20:22-23).
- **Laying of Hands:** 2 Timothy 1:6

The Ordination or Laying of hands



Jesus founded His Holy Church on the rock of true faith which was proclaimed by St. Peter the head of the Apostles (Matt 16:16-19). Peter is given the supremacy and primal position in the Holy Church.

Jesus gave His disciples the Holy Spirit and commanded them to ensure the continuity of His church "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). "They had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, James 5:14).

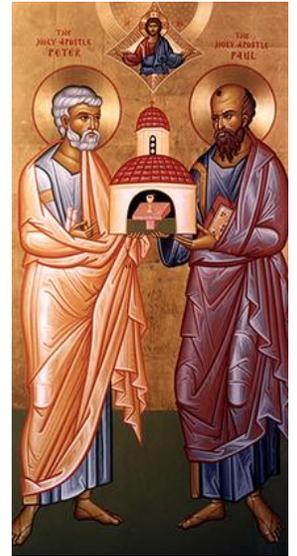
This authority to administer the powers of priesthood is transmitted through laying of hands by a legitimate successor of St. Peter (2Tim1:6). The laying of hands and succession that began with Christ, with Peter is practiced today with Episcopal consecrations and priesthood ordinations.

Priest's Role:

The priest carries a very important responsibility in the eyes of God and the Holy Church. The Good Shepherd (Psalm 23) is expected to be well trained (Mal. 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:8-12) and be a model Christ as the good shepherd and tend his flock accordingly.

The priest role is to:

- ❖ **Know** his sheep (John 10:14): the priest should understand the various needs of his parishioners and care for them accordingly.
- ❖ **Feed** his sheep (John 21:15-17): the priest through the sacraments provide the proper nourishment for his people.
- ❖ **Lead** his sheep (John 10:27): The priest humbly serves them as a servant to a master as Lord Christ washed the feet of His disciples, so his service is successful and acceptable before God and people. He holds the mystery of faith with a pure conscience
- ❖ **Protect** his sheep (John 10:12-13)
- ❖ **Train** his sheep (Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 22:6): the priest will compliment good behaviors and correct wrongdoings
- ❖ **Seek** lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7): the priest is hospitable to strangers and merciful to the poor and needy.



Know Your Priest

Syriac (Mor Balai Tune 1):
Malko shaleethu b'hon olmothu obar
Kohno shaleethu bathraihun olme

English:

The authority of kings are for this world.
Priesthood is for this world and for the world to come.

Priesthood in our Holy Church Today:

- ❖ Priests are the representatives of Jesus and his authority is not from congregation but from God. Whoever receives you, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives Him who sent me." (Matt: 10:40). "As you have sent me into the world, even so I also send them into the world" (John 17:18).
- ❖ Divine commissioning is essential to receive priesthood. No one takes this honor upon himself; this honor is granted and given by God, just as He granted the honor to Aaron (Hebrews 5:4). Priesthood is a great honor as it is a consecration of the work with God for the salvation of the souls of the people of God.
- ❖ Priesthood is man's reply to the divine call and choice. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16)
- ❖ Training (education): The Lord Jesus Himself chose and called His righteous apostles and He graduated them from His divine school. He bestowed on them the power of teaching, edification, disciplining, justification and sanctification for the building of the Holy Body of Christ which is the Church. Today also those interested in ordained ministry through seminary and trainings with senior priests prepare for priesthood. The final decision and consideration of a candidate for ordination is at the discretion of the Archbishop.
- ❖ Secret behind divine call: Each individual will have a personal and unique desire to pursue ordained ministry for a variety of reasons. Some may know at an early age their interest in the vocation, others may experience a yearning or gradual transition over the course of education and experience. There is no prescribed course for this progression but occurs at the individual level.
- ❖ A priest has a unique role, from a spiritual perspective from the time of baptism beyond death the priest plays an integral part in a Syriac Christian's life. He not only conducts the 7 sacraments but also remembers the departed souls in prayers and Holy Qurbano. The priest is a person who represents the Holy Church in a local place. So he has to ensure the faith and traditions of the Church are followed, and act as a bridge between the local people and the Church hierarchy.



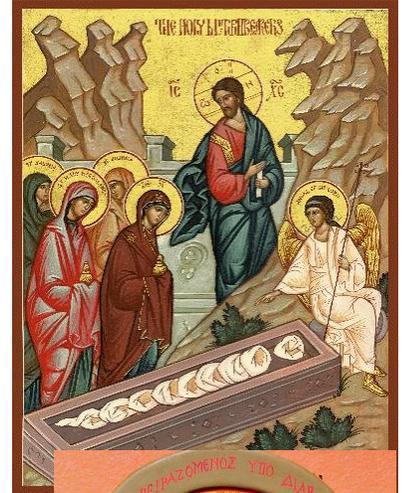
A priest as your spiritual father:
loves, commands, instructs, guides, encourages, warns, trains, rebukes, restrains,
punishes, chastens, nourishes, delights in his spiritual children successes, is deeply
pained by his parishioners sufferings, and he is considerate of his children's needs.



Rules for Marriage for Priests:

The Council of Nicea on the year 325 AD made a decision that priests must be married as according to the nature of their service, they enter houses and solve family problems but the bishops must be celibate. After getting ordained as a priest he is considered as the father of the whole congregation. Therefore, if he wants to marry, he should do it before becoming a full-deacon (m'shamshono) . He must be a husband of one woman and his marriage should be correct and legal. Celibacy is also recommended in priesthood. If a priest becomes a

widower, he should not remarry another woman, for being the father of all women, he cannot marry one of his daughters.



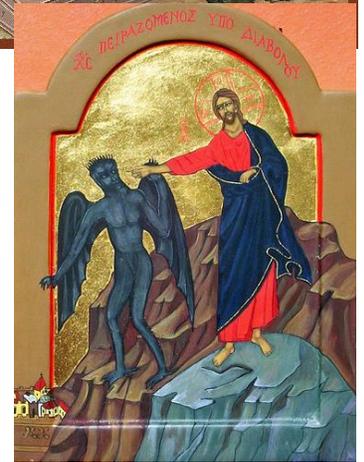
Mudakku (Restraining) and Mahron (Excommunication)

DID YOU KNOW?

As with any vocation, priests also have codes of conduct and disciplinary actions that are enforced by the Holy Church.

The Sacrament of Priesthood is the Holy Church, through Christ's authority and succession, enabling the Holy Spirit's involvement in all the duties and responsibilities thereby conducted by the ordained priest. As with any vocation, misdeeds and or actions will result in appropriate disciplinary actions. Traditionally there is protocol in handling such misconduct. When a priest is found to be in offense such as unethical behaviors, disobedience towards hierarch, etc, he is formally reprimanded and counseled by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese in which he is ordained and practicing in at the time. If after the warning the priest continues the misbehavior, usually the bishops can take disciplinary actions like restraining (*Mudakku*) a priest from his duties. The *Mudakku* is a formal suspension from duties performed by the priest. The restraining period is a time for the priest to reflect, repent and

reconcile with the Holy Church. If the priest continues to defile the orders of the Church, excommunication (*Mahron*) is considered the last measure of disciplinary action. At any time after the Archbishop is confident of the remorsefulness and sincerity of the priest the suspension and/or excommunication can be revoked.



Women in Ministry:

Often the question arises, why only men are selected for the vocation of priesthood. There are many scriptural references to justify the call of priesthood to be selected from men. In the Old Testament period, all male Levites were priests and were considered as helpers in the sanctuary (Numbers 16:1- 17: 1-13). The scripture does not oppose or endorse the practice ordaining women but it is accepted based on Christ's model (Christ's selection of 12 men to be Apostles, Priesthood succession only recorded in the scriptures for men, the presence of selected men during the baptism of Christ, the transfiguration of Christ, etc).

It is critical to note that women played an important role in the Old Testament times and during Christ's ministry and the spread of Christianity. God has given women an integral role in society/Church/life and one of the most beautiful blessings of motherhood, which a

DID YOU KNOW?

Women were selected by God to be judges, prophetesses, witnesses but neither in the Old Testament nor New Testament were they given the right to Priesthood.

man can never experience or enjoy. In the same manner, priesthood has been set aside as a vocation for men to accept. As St. Paul mentions this call is not for everyone but for those specially selected by God for His work. Many women choose to be a part of the ministry by becoming a nun, marrying a deacon and supporting the various aspects of priesthood, teaching in the Sunday School and being part of spiritual organizations, singing in the choir, mentoring youth and children and other women, involve in charity work, the list is endless.

God has given different talents and strengths to each human being, what is most important is to use whatever God has bestowed upon you to glorify Him. When God created the world He had a purpose for each creature, we cannot question why He made a Lion eat other animals, or why God created Eve from Adam's rib and not vice versa. God created the world in His will and way. Just because women cannot become priests it does not

make them any weaker or lesser than men. Women have been recognized in the Bible and church history testifies the importance of both women and men in His works. Although some denominations allow women to serve as priests, currently the Syrian Orthodox Church reserves this sacrament for male members of the Holy Church. It is not to show any discrimination against women, it is only to follow the great traditions that have been followed by our Holy fathers. As Orthodox Christians we give extreme importance to our rich traditions, our holy fathers and saints. It is our duty and responsibility to continue to protect and preserve our Orthodox faith and traditions, and make every attempt to do as much as we can to safeguard this faith we are all a part of.



Pause & Ponder

Just because women have not been allowed to become priests or clergy does not make them lose out on any grace from God Almighty. All the service that any priest does or any layman does be it man or woman, is for the glory of our God. Every man and woman should strive with all his/her might to serve the Lord in any way they can, being in the limitations and rules set out by the church. Serving the Lore translates to serving the church, people in need and the community. How are you serving the church and the community? Are you satisfied with the way you are serving the Lord and what more do you think you can do?

CHECKPOINT:

1. Describe the progression of Priesthood through the Old and New Testament.
2. Explain the institution of Priesthood in the New Testament.

CHALLENGE: Priests play an important and vital role in the Holy Church. They serve as not only a celebrant of the Sacraments but as a spiritual mentor and counselor. By understanding their role and their responsibility to the Holy Church and its people we may better utilize them for our spiritual nourishment. How can you encourage and support your parish priest?

Prayer:

Holy Qurbono Hymn: Manglish

Daivam Srushtichadathe -
Srishtavodu thulliyam srishti
Yai manmayanudhyanathil -
Tharu nirayil poi vanneedu
 Nnathukanman ullanatham -
 Sookshichum konde mevi
Koorunneerenmar - manninuyarchayiI ascharyam. Barekmor
Priest: Subho...

Aadhya charyathwam kaikko -
Ndaharon Moosa yodonnichu
Skariyaikkathunalki Moosa -
Skariya Yohannaneki
 Yohannan karthavinnun
 Kartha than sleehanmarkkum
Nana sriushti vibhagamgalkkeki sleehanmar
Mor'yo Rahemelai-noovadarain.

Paranil bhakthiya madhbahayil -
Paricharicha pattakkare
Paramanada desathil -
Parichodeerayar cherkkate, Barekmor.
Priest: Subho...

Maranneedalle soonunadha -
Susrooshakaram vaihekare
Uyirppin valiyoru nalinkal
Avarkkekaname mukha kanthi
Mor'yo Raheme lainoovadarain

Holy Qurbono Hymn: English

God had created Adam
Rested He and Looked on him
And beheld him beautiful-
His creator's image there;
 When the earth-born moved and passed
 Through the trees of paradise,
Angels wond'ring gazed,
Seeing man exalted thus. Barekmor
Priest: Sub ho'Labo...

When the priesthood passed on down –
Moses got it, Aaron too
Moses passed it to Skar-yah –
Passed Skar-yah it on to John
 John did pass it to our Lord,
 Christ ordained apostles twelve;
They were sent forth by Him
And Passed it on throughout the world.
Mor'yo Rahemelai-noovadarain

Blest be priests whose love for Christ
Mark'd their sacred altar's task;
Watching angels haste to come –
Leading them to courts of joy.
Priest: Sub'ho Labo....

Son of God forget them not –
Priests of thine who served Thee right.
Grant them pleasantness of face –
On Thy advent day sublime. Mor'yo Rahemelain....