

The Lutheran Church Says:

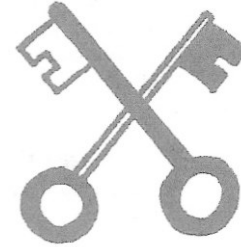
We agree with the New Testament doctrine: “No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called” (Augsburg Confession XIV). Melancthon later commented on his meaning here when he wrote: “Just as Paul also commands Titus to make presbyters in the cities.”

We approve of the historic ministry: “Therefore the bishop (pastor) has the power of order, i.e., the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; he has also the power of jurisdiction, i.e., the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes, and again to absolve them if they are converted and seek absolution” (Apology XXVIII, 12). “It is our greatest wish to maintain the ancient Church polity and the government of bishops” (Apology XIV, 1).

Lutheran ministers are priests: They “are called priests to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments to the people” (Apology XIII, 9).

When our divine Lord said that He would be with the Church to “the end of the world,” He could not have meant that he would remain on the earth visibly as He did for thirty-three years, because immediately after saying these words He ascended. Rather, He referred to the Apostles and their “sacred deposit” which they have handed down for two thousands years, the Word and the Sacraments and “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

We have this Ministry; let us cherish it, honor it, and thank God for it.



The Sacred Ministry

INCARNATE WORD TRACT SERIES

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Before Christ was born, salvation was offered to men through the ministry of the Old Testament priesthood. It was the specific task of this ministry to offer blood sacrifices which would convey to men God's forgiveness in anticipation of the Sacrifice of Calvary. But it was the will of God that this priesthood should pass away.

Christ the Great High Priest

The Epistle to the Hebrews shows how temporary the priesthood of Aaron was. In speaking of our Lord's priestly office, His one sacrifice for the sins of the world, this book says that He is "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," not Aaron (Hebrews 7). Melchizedek was a mysterious character in the Old Testament, who was without traceable ancestry. He seemed to be without beginning and without end. He appeared from nowhere, to Abraham and then disappeared. Christ came as Melchizedek, priest of God.

Christ Passed His Priesthood On

On the day of His Ascension, Christ bestowed authority upon the Apostles to continue His Work: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (St. Matthew 28.18-20). He also said to the Apostles: "He that heareth you heareth Me" (St. Luke

10.16) and again: "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you" (St. John 20.21).

When Christ sent representatives, He did not part with His power; rather, He entrusted it to the Apostles. St. Paul takes this thought up when he says: "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (1 Corinthians 5.20). "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4.1).

The Apostles Passed the Priesthood On

The New Testament teaches that the authority of the Sacred Ministry is passed on through the laying on of hands and prayer. This we call Holy Ordination. St. Paul, in speaking to St. Timothy, says: "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee by the putting on of my hands, That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1.6, 14).

The "good thing which was committed" is the sacred deposit, the mysteries of God, which we call the Word and the Sacraments. What applied to the Apostles through Christ's words also apply now to all who have received Holy Ordination: "Preach" (St. Mark 16.15), "baptize" (St. Matthew 28.19), "forgive" (St. John 20.23), and "this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11.24).