

National Directory for Catechesis
Catechesis for the Sacrament of Holy Orders
USCCB, 2005

- Explain that the whole Church is a priestly people and that, through Baptism, all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ, the common priesthood of the faithful
- Teaches that “the ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful”
- Sets forth the effects of the sacrament: that it configures a man to Christ either in the priesthood or diaconal service by a special grace of the Holy Spirit and imprints an indelible sacramental character that marks him permanently
- Teaches that “Church authority alone has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders”
- Teaches that the Church, in the person of the bishops, confers the Sacrament of Holy Orders only on baptized men: “priestly ordination, which hands on the office entrusted by Christ to his Apostles of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the faithful, has in the Catholic Church from the beginning always been reserved to men alone”
- Teaches the symbols, gestures, prayers, and scriptures of the Rite of Ordination, including the laying-on of hands and the bishop’s prayer of consecration
- Describes the three degrees of the ordained ministry: that of bishops, that of priests, and that of deacons
- Explains that the grace of the Holy Spirit empowers bishops, priests, and deacons- each in ways particular to their order- to share in the saving action of Jesus Christ’s ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and building up the Church
- Makes clear that the Latin Church calls ordained ministers, with the exception of permanent deacons, to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord by committing themselves to celibacy as a sign of the new life of service to which they are consecrated; ordinarily, the Sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred only on men who freely promise to embrace celibacy for the length of their lives
- Teaches that, in the Eastern Churches, priests and deacons are ordinarily permitted to marry before their ordination
- Teaches that permanent deacons may be men who are already married but that, after ordination to the diaconate, they cannot enter into another marriage