

The past two weeks have been extraordinary, something only Almighty God could arrange in His Providence. On April 8, CFN [reported](#) on the hospitalization of Bishop Tissier de Mallerais and the delay of ordination ceremonies. I was in Virginia at the time as my oldest son, Mr. Cormack McCall, was one of the ordinands to the orders of Porter and Lector. Ten members of our family made the trip to Virginia to learn the night before the ceremony of the postponement due to His Excellency's health. We were grateful for the opportunity to visit with our fourth-year seminarian son but were disappointed not to see his ordination.

His Excellency was discharged from the hospital during Passion Week and we received a call on Saturday afternoon, April 13, to inform us that the ordinations would occur on Monday, April 15. Our son called from Indianapolis as he and another seminarian had just driven a first-year seminarian home due to the hospitalization of his father for a serious condition (please remember this seminarian and his family in your prayers as his father's health is still in a serious condition). My son said he had to drive right back to Virginia instead of recovering from the all-night drive.

I was fortunate enough to be able to find a ticket to Virginia the next day. It appeared to be the last seat on the flight. I went directly from Palm Sunday Mass to the airport. Due to the quick timetable, I was the only one in our family able to make the return trip.

It was well worth the cost and effort as I was able to witness a most extraordinary ceremony.

His Excellency conferred six orders in one ceremony (Porter, Lector, Exorcist, Acolyte, Subdeacon, and Deacon) on 23 candidates. It is quite unusual to see six orders conferred on one day. Typically (and as was originally planned for the prior weekend), the minor orders are conferred on Friday and the Subdiaconate on Saturday. Usually the diaconate is conferred in June. Yet due to the unusual circumstances, His Excellency conferred all of these six steps leading to the priesthood on one day.

It was very moving to watch this ceremonial ascent to the priesthood. The orders have their origin in Apostolic times and in the form we have them today we have documentary evidence from as early as the year 250. The conferring of these orders over time manifests the great prudence of Holy Mother Church. She recognizes the awesome power and responsibility of the sacred priesthood and realizes that due to its greatness, a man needs to be raised gradually to such heights.

Analogously on the natural level, one who quickly ascends to a high altitude can suffer serious physical ailments, whereas one who ascends gradually over time and allows his body to acclimate to the new altitude over time will adapt more easily. Likewise, a deep sea diver

who ascends to the surface too quickly will suffer from “the bends.”

Each of the orders confers a limited aspect of the priestly authority and responsibility on the candidate so that the man receives gradually over years some of the authority of the priest.

The porter is charged with care of the Church building and its safety. He also is charged with ringing the church bells. This order reminds the priest of his ultimate responsibility for care of the temporal possessions of the Church, even if as a practical matter he delegates this duty to competent laymen. The lector is granted the authority to read the lessons in the liturgy and to bless first fruits and bread. The exorcist is granted the power to exorcise demons. The acolyte is granted the duty of carrying the candles and cruets to the altar. He is responsible for the care of these material items for the Holy Sacrifice. The subdeacon is empowered to assist the deacon, to care for and bring the sacred vessels to the altar and to ensure the availability of holy water for the holy rites. He also is charged with chanting the Epistle at a Solemn Mass. The deacon is granted powers to proclaim the Gospel, preach, and baptize. He also directly assists the priest with the vessels at Mass and can open and close the Tabernacle and transfer the Blessed Sacrament.

As noted earlier, although outside of the seminary the day to day functions of many of these duties are conferred upon competent sacristans, ushers, and altar boys, leading the priest through these ancient orders of the Church forms in his mind the clear understanding that even if delegated on a daily basis these responsibilities remain ultimately with the priest and he is ultimately responsible for their execution in churches entrusted to his care.

Rather than flying immediately to the top of the altar of God, the candidate for the priesthood must climb the mountain gradually and pass through these seven (including the priesthood itself) terraces, much like the seven terraces of Purgatory through which Dante must pass in his *Purgatorio*.

In the intervening days between my two trips to Virginia, a member of our extended family attempted to dismiss the seriousness of the delayed ceremonies by proclaiming that it really did not matter since these were not ordinations and these orders do not exist. In the Conciliar Church, he is correct. One of the many destructive changes wrought directly by the Council (not its following spirit) was the suppression of the minor orders and the Subdeaconate. It is hard for me to even imagine the hubris of Council Fathers voting to abolish ceremonies and disciplines dating back to the first centuries of the Church and which are imbued with the life and spirit of the ancient Church in the catacombs. Can the innovators not see that such suppression must have contributed at least in part (there are obviously many causes) to the dereliction of duties of priests in the Conciliar Church over the past five decades? The authorities of the modern Church seem unwilling to accept the

responsibility for failures that occur under their watch, failures of abuse and financial mismanagement leading to massive lawsuits and parish closures. Ideas have consequences. If priests are no longer gradually and thoroughly prepared to receive the awesome authority and power of the priesthood, is it a surprise that those rushed to the top are unprepared and act accordingly?

Thank God, there are still a few seminaries around the world that still prepare and form priests according to the old disciplines and traditions of the Church. Let us pray for these seminarians and those who form them in the path up the mountain of God, the God that gives joy to them in their youth.

If you attend the Traditional Good Friday Liturgy, you will hear the Church pray for each of these orders of the priesthood in one of the solemn prayers chanted just after the veneration of the Cross. As you hear their Latin names read out, you could pray for each of the young men in these orders and for perseverance in his vocation.