

Chapter 7

The Sacrament of Holy Orders

[Consecration of St. Augustine by Ambrogio Bergognone]

In this assignment, students will engage with the rites of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. One of the rites—the imposition of hands—is displayed in the Consecration of St. Augustine. Ask the students to describe the rite in their own words before moving on to the rest of the assignment. Also name the other two key rites: prostration and the anointing with sacred chrism. Next, play a short video of an ordination rite (e.g., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs6QCyk1rx4>). Next, conduct a class discussion around each of the three rites using the following prompts and questions.

Prostration

Prostration as part of the Sacrament of Holy Orders points to a man literally “lays down his life” for Jesus and the Church.

- How are you called to lay down your life for others?
- What makes the priest’s sacrifice different?
- During the prostration, the congregation prays for the intercession of the saints over all the candidates. What are some things that a priest would need special prayers for?

Imposition of Hands

The imposition of hands as witnessed in the *Consecration of St. Augustine* is used for the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of Holy Orders. During this imposition of hands, the bishop lays his hands upon the person’s head and prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

- What do you think is the difference between the imposition at Confirmation and the one at Ordination? (Think about the different gifts of the Holy Spirit that a priest needs in comparison to what a Catholic needs in order to exercise their vocations in the world).

Anointing with Sacred Chrism

During Baptism and Confirmation, a person is anointed with the sacred chrism on the head. (Chrism is an oil mixed according to an ancient recipe with certain spices and herbs.) During an ordination to the priesthood a new priest is anointed with the sacred chrism on his hands.

- Why would a priest need a special blessing on his hands that other Christians might not need? (Think about what a priest does with his hands, especially during the celebration of the sacraments?)

Extra Credit

Ask the priest or deacon assigned to your school, or one of the priests or deacons in your parish, if they would be open to be interviewed. Ask them what their experience is. Do they like being a priest or deacon? Would they recommend it to others? What's their favorite thing about their life? How do they experience God being present to them in their daily life?