

Working through the Minor Orders

The grade of cleric is the 'first' minor order, but every minor order is the same 'rank', so when made Doorkeeper, the next order, you are not any 'higher' than before....it is just that you have moved a little further on your progression. It is worth remembering that every member of OCAC clergy remains in perpetuity a member of each of the orders: every priest is still a deacon, and likewise a sub-deacon, acolyte, exorcist, reader, doorkeeper and cleric. Please read the 'Duties of those in Minor Orders' for a list of the responsibilities and the services you can hold.

In order to benefit from the minor orders, it is important to hold worship services and perform actual serving whilst in the orders, like the practical assignments of study...or an apprenticeship. Unlike an apprentice, you will not be accompanied by your mentor, but they will be available for advice and guidance both before and after any ecclesial activity. The minor orders are pastoral ministry in preparation for sacerdotal (sacramental) ministry in the major orders.

It is very real serving, but the emphasis is pastoral (we do have a pastors role in the church which is neither minor or major orders; rather for those who join us from a 'protestant' background and have no wish to sacerdotal ministry). It is also pastoral towards the candidate themselves as they grow and learn in ministry.

Cleric

This is the first (chronologically admitted) minor order. Clerics were historically asked to keep themselves clean and tidy, to act in a respectable manner and to become fellow-workers for God. After a period of time in this ecclesial setting they were admitted to Doorkeeper. We ask you today to practice and get used to working and serving in a ministerial environment; think like a disciple of Christ and behave like a minister (which means servant); patiently, quietly and yet effective. Try to emulate a minister you know or have known, and get used to being one that people will look up to and shape their lives by. The charge in the ordination of clerics requires you to learn self-control and acquire additional skills. Train the emotions and the mind, as well as the physical body in preparation for the life of a minister. Learn control of speech, manner and character, so your serving will be effective.

Doorkeeper

In this order, the candidate is encouraged to keep their heart free from bad thoughts and emotions in the same way the church door was to be welcoming to genuine Christian worshippers and visitors, but kept shut against those seeking to damage the church or steal her property. So in this next grade we must do the same: building on the skills of the cleric, we must now be welcoming to everyone, whilst holding our beliefs and values - not an easy thing to do. The charge in the ordination of Doorkeepers requires you to keep your heart open at all times for the expression of good, but closed to bad or unworthy thoughts. Next is...

Reader

Other churches have a position of Lay Reader, but the minor order of Reader is considerably more than that. Originally, when not everyone could read (even some clergy) a reader was appointed to read the lessons and intone them. This was also a time when some clergy spoke Latin only, and the reader would read the vernacular or local language. It is your duty as a Reader to polish up your scripture skills and in delivery of prayer or the spoken word. In

today's minor order, it is also your duty to train, study and develop the mind; so you may train and develop the minds of others.

Exorcist

The banishing of evils spirits is now done only by senior priests and then only with permission. However, it was considered a role for the minor orders in years gone by as it is a natural progression from earlier orders: once you yourself are clean and self-controlled, and you welcome others of like intent whilst shutting out undesirable forces; it follows that the down-right bad forces be banished completely away. Today the emphasis is more on the healing aspect of keeping darkness away, and in this order you must develop the skills to help and to heal disagreements and to be a wise counsel and advocate for those who seek your advice. By prayer, the healing of the body follows the healing of the soul which is the role of the Exorcist in this respect.

Acolyte

This was a training grade of preparing the altar items and understanding their uses. Today it is a similar learning step where the preparation of items and their significance in worship is learned and practiced. Today's acolytes should do this too, but by looking, watching and being at worship and learning by 'being there' what happens, when, and what is done at each stage of the worship service. The Acolyte today should also regard the altar of the human heart - their own and others - and offer each of our lives as a sacrifice to God.

Sub-deacon

This was and still is a probationary grade for the Major (Holy) orders. It is the order where the title 'Reverend' is assumed and it is a time of learning the deacon's role. Sub-deacons shadow a deacon, doing some of the deacon's functions and preparing for time when they are ordained to deacon in the Holy Orders. In the sub-diaconate which will last only a matter of weeks, you will prepare for the diaconate by embracing the invisible aspects of ministry by showing true reverence to the visible.

The church is pleased to have you working in Minor Orders and will help you grow and learn in them.

Please try and embrace each of the intents of each minor order and take them to heart. In this way, the Minor Orders are a good way to enlarge your serving and lay strong foundations for your development into Major or Holy Orders. Your mentor will speak with you about this, but please don't wait! If you have any questions...ask!