

A PATH TO ORDINATION

As discussed in last year's Spring VISION newsletter, we moved our Sunday School, THRIVE youth discussions, and confirmation teaching and celebrations into seasons. Another important function of our church in the USA will follow suit – **ordinations** with a new process and preparation for to-be ministers.

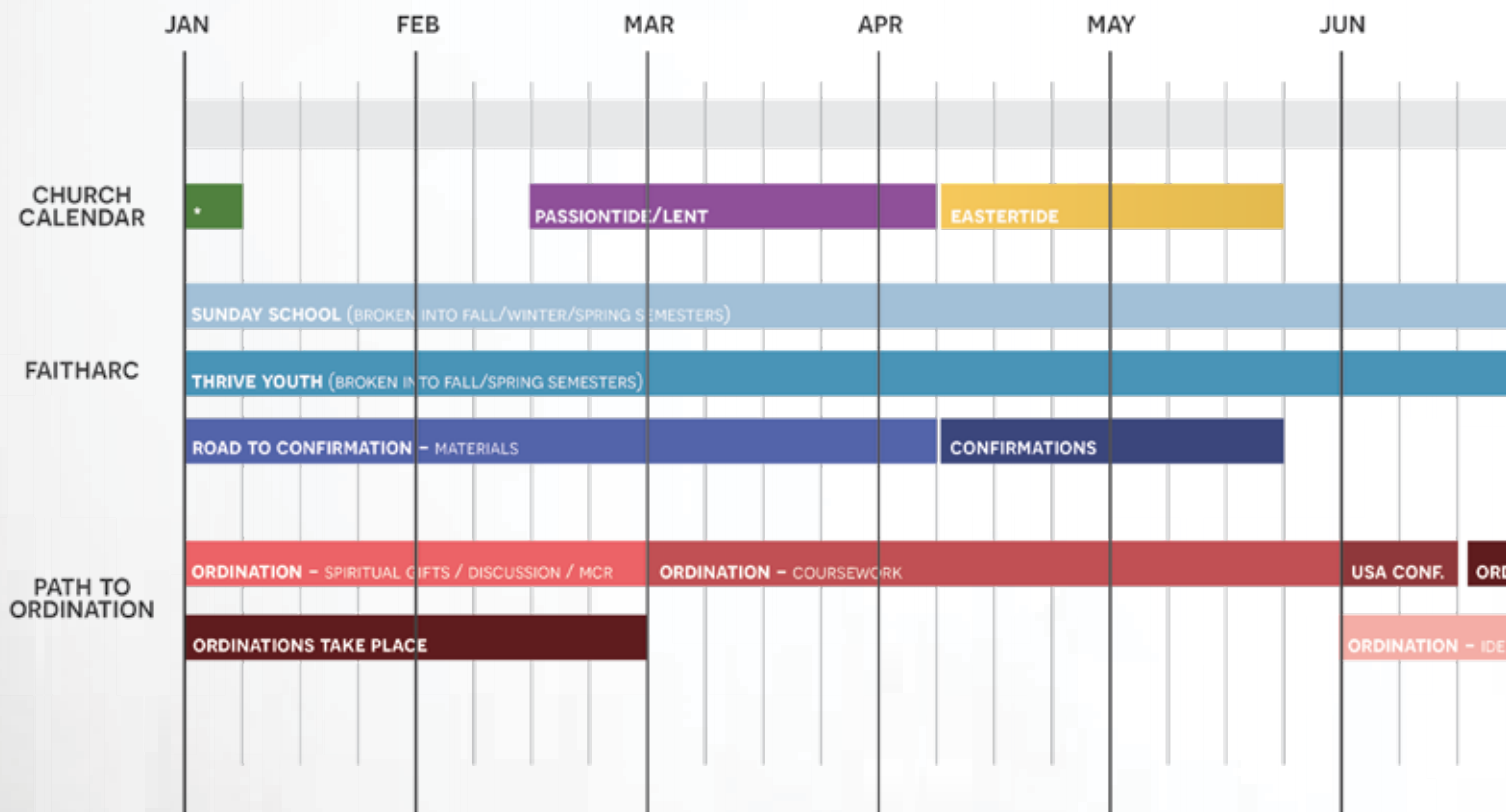
The New Apostolic Church has understood itself as a church of ministry from its beginnings. It is our belief that Jesus Christ Himself set forth ministry in His church as shown in Ephesians 4; 11-2 -

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...

Thus, the church is led by Jesus Christ who sent the apostolate to proclaim the gospel and dispense the sacraments. All other ministries come forth out of the Apostle ministry. Concerning this, the Fifth Article of Faith states:

I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministration come forth out of the Apostle ministry.

Ordination is not a sacrament but rather an act of blessing; being designated for ministry is not based upon human will but upon divine will. Therefore, the person being ordained has been designated or called for the ministry by God, and the ordination is the investiture of a spiritual ministry. In this holy and humble act, the minister being ordained makes a vow before God, the Apostle, and the congregation to remain faithful to God,



* CHRISTMASTIDE & EPIPHANY

to follow Christ in serving, and to promise obedience of faith.

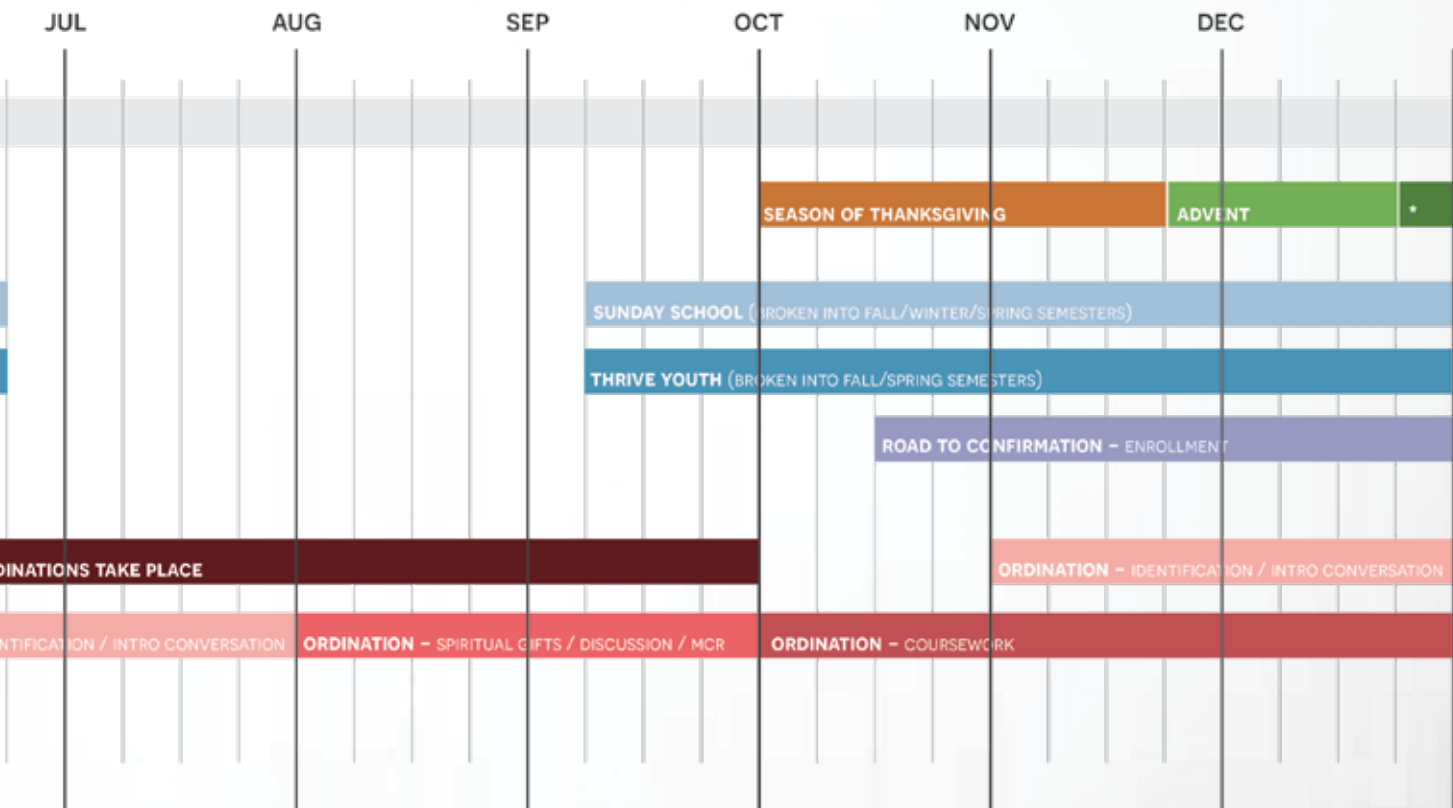
Due to the importance of ordained ministry and added emphasis due to the international church's Concept of Ministry, the following process has been established for ordinations. Today, by adopting a consistent and reliable process for potential ministers, we can create a clarity of expectations and transparency of the procedure. Additionally, a more structured approach to ordination, including appropriate training and examining prerequisites, will contribute to the confidence in our ministers and church.

This means that, except for rare cases, our church will be preparing members who feel called to ministry concurrently during a specific season. In preparation for ordination, candidates will discover their spiritual gifts, complete specified coursework relevant to their

ministry, and engage in discussion with their rector, district rector, and apostle to better understand the expectations of their ministry and build relationships of care and support with those they will serve beside.

While simplifying some of the administrative functions, this also builds in a certain communion with those preparing themselves for ordination – concluding in a National New Ministers conference annually in June.

This further then leads to specific seasons when those prepared will be ordained into their ministries. It is our intent that this process will provide the necessary information and teaching to better equip the new servants to edify the body of Christ. – **LRK/KAH**



Fellowship with and in Christ



NAC Canada



1 John 1: 3

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, I think that many of us are very grateful to our heavenly Father that He made it possible to celebrate and experience this divine service here together in Calgary and that so many brothers and sisters in North America can be connected with us. We are thankful to our heavenly Father that He has answered our prayers and we can be together to receive the message of God transmitted by the Holy Spirit.

The first message of the Holy Spirit is that none of us are forgotten by God. I want to address this message especially to those who are going through hardships and afflictions. There are many of them. Right now, everything is about Covid. But at the same time, life goes on. Many brothers and sisters have to live with illnesses, others are mourning, still others have problems in their job or the family or as a

couple. Others have financial issues. Maybe one thinks, OK now that is forgotten because it is all about Covid. No one is forgotten by God. He knows your thoughts, He knows your problem, He shares your pain. Trust Him. He will help.

I would like to address this same message to those on the brighter side of life, those who experience many beautiful things, who are happy, who experience the blessing and presence of God. Maybe they feel ashamed that they have no problems. Do not be ashamed. Jesus shares your joy. Thank Him in an appropriate manner and enjoy the blessing God has granted you. No one is forgotten by our heavenly Father.

Even in this difficult, very special period, nothing has changed for us when it comes to our priority, the most important aspect of our lives. We want to be prepared for the return of Christ. That is why we are here today. That is why we believe in Christ. We want to have eternal fellowship with God. We want to take part in the fellowship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We want to be together with Christ in His kingdom forever. That is the *raison d'être*, the meaning of the Christian faith. This has nothing to do with being happy on earth, being successful, having no problems, becoming rich, or whatever. A Christian has this strong desire to have eternal fellowship with Christ. Otherwise, Christ would have died for no reason. We want to have fellowship with God in His kingdom. We want to take part in the fellowship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That is why we have this motto “Together in Christ”. That is the next step in His plan of salvation.

Here the writer of the epistle of John says, if you want to have fellowship with God you need to have fellowship with the Apostles. There is a reason for that. At the time, this is a few decades into the early Christian church, there were different conceptions of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. Some had this conception and others another one. The leaders of the church realised that this cannot be. That is why the writer says here in this letter: if you want to have fellowship with Christ you must have fellowship with the apostolate; you have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles; you have to believe in the testimony of those who saw and heard Jesus Christ when He was on earth.

So we are not talking about the doctrine of the New Apostolic Apostles here. We are talking about the teaching of the Apostles at the time of the Bible. We are talking about the testimony of those who saw and heard Jesus Christ while

He was on earth, those who were commissioned and sent to teach others what Jesus had told them. You cannot have communion with Christ if you do not believe in the doctrine, in the testimony of the Apostles as described in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ warned that there would be many who would say, “‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘Look, He is there!’” He even said that there would be people who would say that they were sent by Christ. They would perform great miracles, would prophesy in the name of Christ, would cast out demons, and would be very successful. Jesus urged caution because not all of them would really be sent by Him (Mark 13: 21–23; Matthew 7: 22–23).

It is not the business of the New Apostolic Church to categorise the different churches and say which one is a good church or a bad church. That is not our business.

The mission of the apostolate today is to proclaim the teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded by the Apostles in Holy Scripture. Everyone can do and preach what they want, but our mission is to prepare ourselves so that we can enter into the kingdom

of God and have fellowship with Jesus Christ. For that we have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles, the testimony of those who were together with Christ on earth. What did they say? What did they report? What did Jesus say about Himself? Let me cite some points.

The first point: Jesus said that the Scriptures—for us today that means the Old Testament—testify of Him (John 5: 39; Luke 24: 44). In the eyes of Jesus, the Old Testament announced His coming. That means it is part of the Apostles’ doctrine that the Old Testament must be understood and interpreted starting from Jesus Christ. What is relevant for our salvation in the Old Testament is what is related to Jesus Christ. We cannot simply take a phrase out of an Old Testament passage and say: “This is for us today.” What in the Old Testament is relevant for us, for our salvation, must be understood in the light of the gospel on the basis of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. This is very important.

Jesus Christ also said that He had not come, that He had not been sent by His Father, to punish the sinners. Quite to the contrary, He was sent to save the sinners. John the Baptist misunderstood this, as did the disciples. They thought they had to punish. Remember Peter? He struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear when they came and wanted to arrest Jesus. Jesus was opposed to this (Luke 22: 49–51). Another time, the disciples wanted to command

None of us are forgotten by God

A choir sang to the delight of the congregation



fire to come down from heaven to punish the sinners. Jesus rebuked them (Luke 9: 51–56). He had not come to punish sinners, but to save them. The doctrine of the Apostles tells us that no one has been sent by Jesus Christ to punish sinners in His name. No one can claim that for himself. Jesus Christ is the Saviour. Of course, society has to establish rules and punish criminals. Jesus was not against this. He respected the social rules of His time. But that is society. But no one can punish anyone in the name and on behalf of Jesus Christ. This does not correspond to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. No one can claim to have been sent by Jesus to punish another person.

Jesus also said: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18: 36). He wanted to say, I did not come on earth to solve all your problems. The Jews were disappointed because they expected that He would deliver them from the Romans, that He would solve all their problems, that the poor would become rich, and the sick would be cured. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He had not come to solve all their problems. He had not come to rule the country. He did not want to become their king and establish His kingdom. His kingdom was not of this world. He was not there to establish a new catalogue of sins and rules. All He said was, “You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10: 27).

Jesus defeated evil and wants to share His victory with us

He did not agree with the Pharisees’ long list of rules and laws. Jesus had not come to rule the world. The gospel is not a list of proposals to solve man’s earthly problems. If we have problems, it is because the world is under the dominion of evil. No one can solve this problem. There is only one Saviour, and that is Jesus Christ. He wants to solve this problem by delivering us from the evil one. He wants to lead us into His kingdom, and later on into the new creation where there will be no more room for evil, where there will be no more suffering and no more death. This is the

solution proposed by Jesus Christ. He tells us what we must do to be saved and enter His kingdom, where evil will no longer exist. This is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of Jesus Christ tells us that the Son of God came on earth, became true man as we are, a human being, and, as a true human being, He defeated evil and death. Thus He received a great merit that no one else can receive because He did what no other human being can do. He defeated evil and death one hundred per cent (Philippians 2: 5–8). And He wants to share His merit with us. He wants to share His victory with us because He knows that we cannot do it alone. He wants us to benefit from His merit, from His victory. All we have to do is believe in Him, trust in Him, and share His love, His feelings, and His trust in God. Paul added that we must share in His suffering (Philippians



3: 10). Jesus did not come to earth to deliver us from all our problems. He wants us to remain steadfast and faithful in trials. Again, He did not come to deliver us from all suffering, but He wants us to participate in His sufferings.

That means when we suffer we are to suffer as He did. Even in trials we are to love God, trust Him, and remain obedient and faithful until the end. This is the fellowship of His sufferings. Again, this is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The last point I wanted to mention is this: He said what we must do to enter His kingdom. And this is not an invention of the New Apostolic Church. He said one must be reborn out of water and the Holy Spirit, otherwise one cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3: 3). That makes sense. You have to receive the life of God to be able to have fellowship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He also added that whoever wants to obtain eternal life must eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6: 54–56). We must celebrate Holy Communion. Whoever wants to obtain eternal life must receive the sacraments. Dear brothers and sisters, that is a short summary of the Apostles' doctrine. The Old Testament is relevant when it relates to the teachings of Jesus Christ and we understand it on the basis of His sayings and actions. Jesus Christ did not come to punish, but to save. He did not come to solve all the problems and to rule today's society. He came to deliver us from evil and to lead us into His kingdom. He defeated evil for us and He wants to share His victory with us. All we have to do is to trust in Him, to share His love, to believe in Him, and

to remain faithful to Him even in suffering; and we must receive the sacraments.

In the first epistle of John it says further that if we want to have fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Father we must have fellowship with one another. You cannot have fellowship with God, you cannot love God, if you do not love each other. That is inextricably linked. If we want to be together with Christ we have to be together in Christ. Jesus explained that very clearly. He showed His solidarity with the believers when He said: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25: 40).

To have fellowship with Jesus Christ we have to share His feelings, His thoughts. Remember, the Son of God—He is God—lived in the glory of God in heaven where everything is perfect, holy, and wonderful. He left this glory to come on earth and to share the conditions of human beings. He shared their joy, their sufferings, and their life. He even accepted death, because human beings must also die. He left His glory to show His solidarity and to be as we are on earth—human beings—in order to save us. If we carry this love of Christ in our hearts, what happens? Then we also have a feeling for the condition of our neighbour and we will be prepared to leave our comfort zone and help when we see that our neighbour is suffering and needs help. This is not that comfortable. It is easier to ignore those who are suffering.

It often seems that suffering is contagious because as soon as someone is unhappy others do their best to avoid him or her. But it is not contagious! Let us leave our comfort zone to stand by our neighbour and share his pain, his suffering, and to comfort him and help him. The great prayer of Jesus for His own was: Father let them be one as You and I are one (John 17: 20–21). Jesus knew that it was not possible to have fellowship with the Father and the Son if you did not have fellowship with one another in the circle of His disciples. Let them be one. He exhorted them to help one another: "Whatever you do for him, you have done for Me." So, again, if we want to be together with Christ, we have to be together in Christ. We have to have fellowship with one another.

To help us do that and make it possible for us to have fellowship with God and with one another, God has sent His Apostles. Through the apostolate we receive everything we need to have fellowship with God and with one another. It is not about the person, but about the ministry! The first thing that helps us to become one is the teaching of the Apostles. And I am not talking about the Apostles who are

alive today. I am so thankful that we have this one doctrine in the New Apostolic Church. We have one faith, one creed, one catechism. How sad it would be if before listening to an Apostle we would have to check which side he is on or which interpretation of Scripture and the gospel he follows. It is so easy in our Church. One creed, one doctrine, one Master, one catechism, one definition, one goal. If we are one with the Apostles' teaching, it is easy to be united. If every preacher and every believer were to have his own interpretation of Scripture, unity would be impossible. I tell you, where the Holy Spirit is at work, He works for unity.

Through the Apostles we also receive forgiveness of sins. When the Apostle or the Priest commissioned by him proclaims, "Your sins are forgiven," we can be sure of Jesus' grace. Without forgiveness we could not have fellowship with God. As sinners we cannot have fellowship with God, we cannot enter His kingdom. We need to be cleansed through the forgiveness of our sins.

Through the Apostles we receive the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Sealing and thus we receive the life of God. How could we have fellowship with God if we did not carry divine life within us? We need to become a new creation and this new creation in Jesus Christ—and only this one—is able to enter the kingdom of God. We need to become a new creation in order to have eternal fellowship with God and this is dispensed by the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ: "Baptize them!" (Matthew 28: 19). Through the Apostles we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The last point. There where the Holy Spirit is at work through the apostolate, we can celebrate Holy Communion and receive what is needed for salvation, namely the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus said, "If you do not eat My flesh and drink My blood you cannot have eternal life." Through the apostolate we receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. When the congregation celebrates Holy Communion the body and blood of Jesus is present. That means that Jesus is not only present as a spirit or we only remember or think about Him. No, He is truly present in flesh and blood. It is not just an idea, it is not just a concept, or some kind of inspiration. When we celebrate Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles, we can be sure that Jesus is present at that very moment in flesh and blood. He is really there, He is with us, He is at our side. We can experience that. He is no longer in the realm of the departed, He is the Living One and He is here.

What happens when He is present? What happened when Jesus was with His disciples? He did not allow them to judge others. He said, "Do not do that. That is My task. It

is not your task." He did not allow them to argue with each other. Many problems were solved simply because Jesus was there. When we celebrate Holy Communion, Jesus is there. Through Him, through His flesh and blood, we receive His nature. He nourishes the new creation within us, and we can grow and develop and be ready to enter the kingdom of God.

Holy Communion also helps us to be together in Christ, to have fellowship with one another in Christ. The Bible says that we are one bread and one body because we partake of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10: 17). When we receive Holy Communion, we can see that we all receive the same bread. This bread is, on one side, the word, the teaching of Jesus Christ, and on the other side, the body and blood of Jesus. And we all receive the same. The whole congregation can see that every child of God, every believer, receives the same teaching and the same sacrament—and that it produces a notable effect in everyone, regardless of the person and the situation in which they find themselves. Indeed, the situation of the members in the congregation can be very different, but when we celebrate Holy Communion, we can see that there is one bread. The goal is the same for all. We all have to follow the same path and believe in it.

It strikes me that we live in a time in which more and more people seem to cultivate their differences to show: "No, I am not like you. You have to respect me. I am different." That is fine. We have to accept the otherness of our neighbour. That goes without saying. And we accept the otherness of our neighbour. But it should not be our goal to emphasise and insist on our differences. One bread! We are one body! Let us rather emphasise what we have in common in Christ. Our differences are not important. What is important is that the solution is the same for all of us. The path we must follow is the same for all of us. So please, let us stop cultivating our differences. Yes, we do respect the otherness of our neighbour, but let us please focus on what we have in common.

When Jesus instituted Holy Communion, He first gave His disciples some bread. Then He took a cup of wine and gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26: 27). There was one cup so that the first disciples had to pass the cup with the wine to the second one, the second one to the third one, and so on. The cup was passed around the table. Jesus said, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26: 28). That is a nice image. This cup with the wine, the blood of Jesus, being passed from one disciple to the next, can be compared to blood circulating in the body. One blood, one body. For practical reasons, we



Chief Apostle Schneider ordained four new Apostles for the USA: Lonnie Klein, Mark Feuerbach, John Schnabel, and Brett Steinbrueck (from the left)

celebrate Holy Communion with wafers, which contain the wine; but the significance is the same. When we celebrate Holy Communion the blood of Jesus flows into the congregation, in which it must circulate. We are aware of the fact that we all need to be cleansed through the blood of Jesus Christ, otherwise we have no redemption, no salvation. The blood needs to circulate within the whole congregation. All of us need to be cleansed. We need forgiveness of sins. We need to be purified by the blood of the Son. We are totally dependent on it. Every part of the body depends on the circulation of the blood. Paul said: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I do not need you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Corinthians 12: 21). That is a nice image for the congregation, for the church, for the unity of the church, for the unity of believers. We are all completely dependent on the blood of Jesus Christ. This helps us to be one and this is what we can experience when the Holy Spirit is at work through the apostolate.

Now to the last point about Holy Communion. When we celebrate it, it is a foretaste of the great marriage supper we will have in heaven together with our Lord Jesus Christ. It reminds us that we all have the same future; and that future will be our perfect joy. Whatever our situation is, we have the same goal and when we celebrate Holy Communion we all say together: “Whatever happens, He will come.” This is our conviction. Human beings and the devil can do what they want. No one can stop Jesus from coming back. And then we want to enter into His kingdom with Him.

My dear brothers and sisters, “Together in Christ” is our motto this year. Our goal is to have eternal fellowship with Christ, and for this we have to believe in the doctrine of the Apostles as described in the Bible. We see Jesus as the Apostles have described Him in the Bible. In order to have fellowship with Jesus, we need to have fellowship with one another. And both, fellowship with God and fellowship with one another, are made possible because we receive everything we need through the activity of the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles sent by Him. This is our treasure. This is our faith. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for His grace.

CORE THOUGHTS

Our goal is fellowship with God. To this end, we remain faithful to the teaching of the Apostles and contribute to the unity of believers. The joint celebration of the Lord's Supper strengthens our fellowship with God and with one another.

Ministry (13): Authority—with limits

Designated and ordained: the ordained minister is authorised to act and speak in the name of God. Nevertheless, these powers are anything but limitless.



The New Apostolic Church always understands ministry from the perspective of **ministerial authority**. And ministerial authority—so reads the official definition—“constitutes the **right to act and speak in the name of the triune God**, which is founded upon Jesus Christ and issued through the Apostle by way of ordination in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Not more than a share

This is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is sent by God and equipped with various powers, that the apostolate shares in the authority of Jesus Christ, and that the Apostles can likewise confer powers upon other ministers.

This already highlights the first limitation: the authority of the minister always exists in relationship to the one who authorises him. The authority bestowed can never be greater than the authority of the person bestowing it. Nor is this authorisation a sacrament that could not be reversed. Just as the authority can be conferred, it can also be withdrawn again.

The right to speak and act in the name of God incorporates various kinds of powers, namely the empowerment to **preach God's word**, **dispense the sacraments**, **proclaim forgiveness of sins**, and **dispense blessings**. The differing measures of participation in these powers forms the basis of the ministerial structure of the New Apostolic Church.

The Bible is the standard

Upon ordination, the **Deacon** receives the authority to properly proclaim God's word and to dispense the Trinitarian benediction, that is, to dispense blessing in the name of the triune God. The first power comprises the **preaching of the gospel in divine service** and the **passing along of God's word in pastoral visits**. And the second power allows the Deacon to conduct a word service, which includes the **invocation of the triune God** at the start, and the **Trinitarian benediction** at the close.

The technical phrase “proper proclamation of the word” highlights a further limitation of ministerial authority. After all, the only “proper” preaching is that based on the words of Jesus Christ as attested in the New Testament. The sermon of the Apostles and all other ministers must therefore always be consistent with Holy Scripture. And in this context, all the essential aspects of the gospel are to be passed along. Above all, these include the death, resurrection, and return of the Lord.

Power and effect

The powers of the Deacon are also conferred upon the **Priest**. Here, however, the dispensation of blessing also extends to **acts of blessing**, such as confirmation or marriage. Beyond that, the Priest receives the authority to administer sacraments and proclaim the forgiveness of sins. The first of these involves **Holy Communion** and **Holy Baptism** with water, which includes the consecration of the elements—of bread and wine or water—as well as the actual dispensation of the sacraments. And the second power allows the Priest to proclaim the absolution by commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus Christ. After all, only God can actually forgive sins.

Using the example of Holy Communion, the Catechism reveals just how important this authority is: “Fully valid Holy Communion—the real presence of the body and blood of Christ—comes into being if it is supported by the power of the Holy Spirit and if the consecration of the elements of Holy Communion is performed on the basis of the authority issued by Apostles” (CNAC 3.5.5.2).

Neither always nor everywhere

All of these powers are also bestowed upon the **Apostle** at his ordination. In the process, the authority to dispense the sacraments is extended, as the Apostles not only dispense the sacraments to the living, but also the dead. Added to that, the Apostle also receives the authority to perform **Holy Sealing**, that is, the authority to dispense the gift of the Holy Spirit. And then there is also the authority to equip ministers—that is, the authority to **ordain**, whereby the Apostle passes along a portion of that which he himself has received.

Nevertheless, even here there are limits—after all, no minister can exercise his authority at all times and in all places. Why? That will be the focus of the next article in this series.

Sources for this article include the Catechism of the New Apostolic Church (long version as well as the Question-and-Answer version), a supplementary “Commentary to Chapter 7” of the CNAC, and Special Editions 03/2017, 04/2017, and 02/2019 of the Divine Service Guide, along with the training materials introducing the concept of ministry / Photo: antic - stock.adobe.com

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