

## **ARCHDEACON**

The rank of archdeacon dates back to the [apostolic](#) age. Having appointed seven deacons, “men of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom,” the apostles selected one of them, Stephen, to be their chief (Acts 6:1-6). However, no mention is made to this particular rank in the letter written by Cornelius, bishop of Rome (251-253), to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, although Cornelius refers to other ranks of the diaconate (Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.43).

The position of archdeacon became fully established in the Eastern and Western churches in the fourth century, as evidenced by the writings of Saint Augustine (*De Diversis Questionibus ad Simplicianum* III.9). Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrihus (393-466), in his history of the Council of NICAEA, describes the position of ATHANASIUS as the principal deacon (reported in *Eusebius* 1. 25). The archdiaconate equally figures in the proceedings of the Council of EPHESUS (431).

Seniority in the diaconate appears to have been the criterion for promotion to the archdeaconate. This rule, nevertheless, was not without its exceptions, as Athanasius became head of the [deacons](#) though still young, without being the most senior of deacons when the [patriarch ALEXANDER I](#) (312-326) appointed him archdeacon. Likewise [Saint JOHN CHRYSOSTOM](#) (347-407) ordained Serapion deacon and then archdeacon of the church of Constantinople (Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.4; Sozomen, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.9).

On the recommendation of the congregation and the clergy, a bishop ordains an archdeacon in accordance with the sacrament of holy orders. The ordination service follows immediately after the prayer of the aspasmus (Kiss of Peace) and before the congregation sings the hymn of the aspasmus. The bishop says: “Our Master, Lover of man . . . do send the [grace](#) of Thy Holy Spirit upon Thy servant [Name] who is called to be an archdeacon through the vote and judgment of those who have brought

him into our midst and the request of those who have given account of him.

Make him worthy to be archdeacon for Thy holy church . . . that he may hold the chalice of the precious Blood of the [Lamb](#) without blemish which is Thine only-begotten Son; that he may minister unto the [orphans](#) and help the widows, having care of the servers . . . nor is this [grace](#) given through the imposition of our hands, we being sinners, but by the visitation of Thy rich compassion, it is given to those who are worthy of it. . . . We pray and beseech Thee, the Good One and Lover of man, on behalf of Thy servant [Name], that Thou shouldst make him worthy of the grace of the calling of the archdiaconate through the descent upon him of Thy Holy Spirit.”

The bishop then lays hands upon him, and he takes part in the celebration of Divine Liturgy.

The archdeacon is charged with making necessary arrangements for church services, assigning various tasks to [deacons](#) and subdeacons; safekeeping of church books, vessels, and vestments; ensuring that church charity is received by the needy; acting as a liaison on behalf of the bishop; and participating in recommending candidates for the diaconate and for promotion to higher ranks.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burmester, O. H. E. *The Egyptian or Coptic Church*. Cairo, 1967.
- Cummings, D. *The Rudder*. Athens, 1908.
- Iqladyus Yuhanna Labib. *Kitab al-Absalmudiyyah al-Sanawiyyah al-Muqadassah*. Cairo, 1911.
- Mas‘udi ‘Abd al-[Masih](#) Salib, al-al. *Al-Khulaji al-Muqaddas*. Cairo, 1902.
- Stanley, A. P. *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*. London, 1906.



Archdeacon | 3

## **ARCHBISHOP BASILIOS**

Tags: [System](#)