

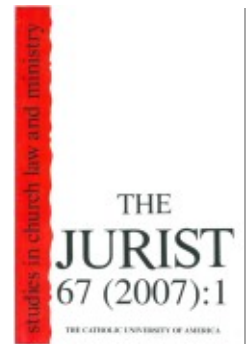


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Episcopal Ordination and Ecclesial Consensus by Sharon L.
McMillan (review)

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ceptions permitting priests in politics had not been enunciated explicitly by the legislator at the time of the codification. Already the supplementary legislation to 1917 code not only forbid political activity on the part of clerics, but also established maximum penalties for transgressors. The prohibitions are based on theological reasons.

In chapter three “From the Vatican Council to the 1983 Code” the author studies the provisions for the involvement of the priests in politics from conciliar documents. According to these texts, the involvement of priests in politics must be congruent with the mission of the Church, as expressed in *Gaudium et spes* 42b. This mission entrusted by Christ to his Church is not of a political, economical, or social order, but a religious order.

The fourth and final chapter “The Legislation of the 1983 Code” analyzes canons 285 §3 and 287 §2, forbidding clergy not only active involvement in politics, but also access to public offices. Sequeira recognizes the need for sound theological consideration and a careful analysis of the semantics of the norms. He employs an exegetical study of the canons with a rather lengthy conclusion.

The text contains fine insights into this complex topic and fulfills the goal intended. It is recommended for canonists, particularly teachers and students; for bishops and diocesan officials; for religious superiors of clerical institutes; and especially for diocesan priests.

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EPISCOPAL ORDINATION AND ECCLESIAL CONSENSUS by Sharon L. McMillan. A Pueblo Book. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005. Pp. xv+311. \$39.95.

The author explains her purpose and procedure at the beginning of this book by referring to the intent and procedure of the commission charged with the revision of ordination rites at the close of the Second Vatican Council. The mandate of this commission was to revise the rites in light of early and venerable Roman tradition. To do this, it had to sort out the evolution of the rite and the various influences upon it. One point on which it had to show discretion was the presentation and approval of the candidate in the ordination ritual. For some centuries, the nomination of

bishops had been in the hands of the Holy See; yet earlier rites show that this was not the procedure in early centuries, either in the Roman, the Gallican, or English churches, from which elements of the ritual were drawn in the course of its history. Without trespassing on the established rights of the Holy See, the commission wanted to include some element of communal consent to the ordination on the part of the assembled Church in the revised ritual.

McMillan's is a painstaking study of a few minutely examined liturgical texts in the Roman tradition having to do with the procedure of choosing a bishop for the local church, considering also the elements taken over from the Gallican into the Roman and evidence from English Pontificals. The texts chosen for study are those which show the most clear evidence of the procedure to be followed in selecting the candidate to be presented for ordination. In summary the work shows how over some centuries the procedure moved from the presentation of the candidate by the church for which he was to be ordained, through a period when the metropolitan had greater voice, and again through a period of interference by secular authorities, to the appointment of bishops by the Holy See. This done, the study then offers some considerations on the voice given to the local church and its people in the present post-conciliar ordination rite. For this minute and careful analysis of texts, which is furnished with a useful bibliography and index, students of the liturgy will be indebted to McMillan.

Choosing a few minute texts from ordinals, the author claims to follow the method of the study of liturgical units fostered by Robert Taft. The reason given for this is that liturgical structures maintain evidence of ancient procedures even when other texts change. This is of course true, but it is also true that when these structural units carry over into later revisions they take on a new sense within a new context. It also seems to be true that without reference to other historical data the original meaning of the unit itself is not totally clear. It is in the section dealing with the affirmation of its rights on the part of popes and curia that the author gives most attention to historical context, showing how popes responded to the interference of secular authorities in the nomination of bishops. It may have been helpful to do more of this historical contextualization in other sections of her study as well.

There is a thesis it seems at work in her study, namely that the pristine procedure was the selection and presentation of the candidate by the local church. The evidence for this is in the ritual acclamation of the assembly, and at a later stage, the questions posed regarding the choice and worthiness of the candidate. In this, the ideal of choice or at least prior

consent by all the faithful of a church is clear enough. How however candidates were in fact chosen, how conflicts were resolved, what pressures were at work, is not so clear; and evidence outside liturgical texts would need to be considered in order to clarify this. In short, the ritual of acclamation does not of itself tell us how somebody was chosen, nor what opposition to his ordination might still have remained within his church, nor how conflicts were resolved. Only case studies, such as those on the ordination of Martin of Tours or of Ambrose, or Gregory of Nazianzen, and Augustine's provision of his own successor, in fact tell us of the rather diverse and at times messy ways by which bishops were selected.

In revising the ritual, the liturgical commission decided to include an expression of consent in the ordination rite, both by asking the faithful to show this and by asking their consensual prayer for the candidate. There is no pretense, however, that it is they who have chosen the person to be ordained. Though McMillan is circumspect in her comments, in fact even if the choice is not pleasing, they are liturgically coerced into showing liturgical approval. The setting can also be misleading, especially when the ordination takes place outside the diocese or outside the metropolitan area, and where the assembly may be made up as much from dignitaries or friends of the ordinand as from members of the church to which he is appointed. One has to say that as long as canonical procedures leading to the nomination of candidates are not revised, the ritual itself is inevitably fraught with ambiguities; and McMillan shows that she is aware of this. Her quotation from Thomas O'Meara towards the end of the book, to the effect that "participation and pluralism" are normal, is quite apposite. The Church today cannot copy the procedures of early centuries, but it can find its own way of leaving the choice of bishops to the local church for which they are ordained, however each community may work this out.

One must commend the usefulness of McMillan's analysis and the scientific care taken with it, as well as the issues to which it gives rise. It certainly contributes to the research of those who study the ways in which bishops have been chosen and ordained throughout the history of the Roman Church and liturgy. It has to be added, however, that liturgy's meaning depends on context and that much else needs to be done before ordination really becomes the affair of a local church.

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