

The Good Word

A Publication of the GOC Diocese of Portland and the West under the Omophorion of Bishop Sergios

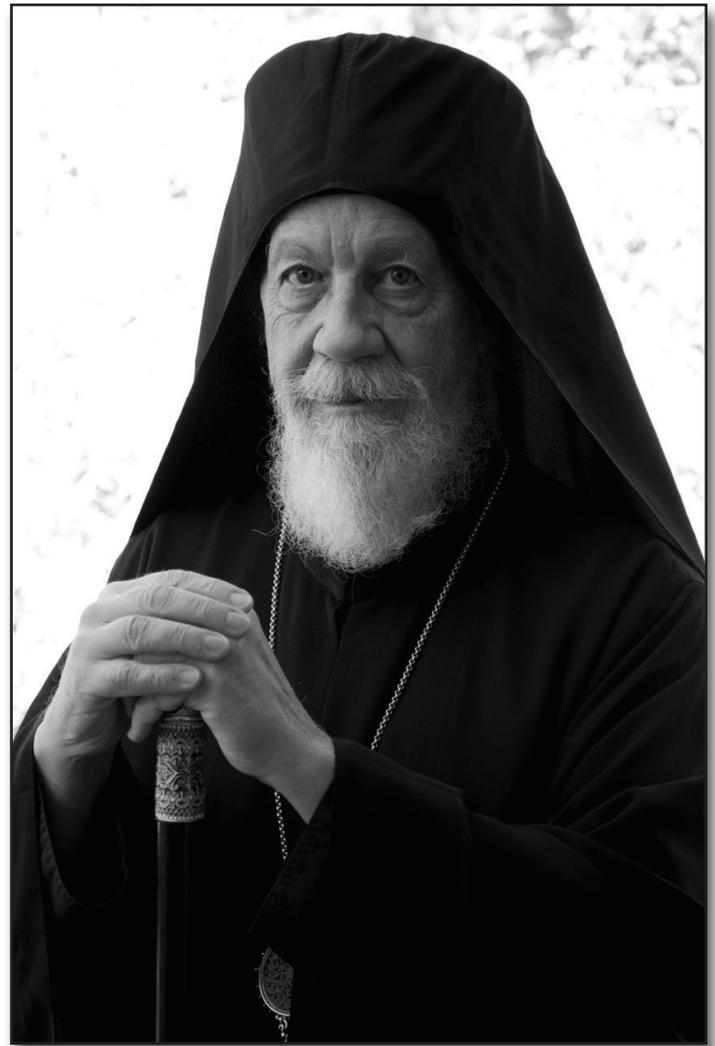
THE INSTALLMENT PLAN

THE RITE OF INSTALLATION of a Hierarch is one of the stages of the assumption of responsibilities by a new Bishop. Soon to be 72, and having been responsible for the Portland Diocese since Metropolitan Moses was reassigned to Toronto some time ago, the term *new* needs to be taken within a context, if not with a grain of salt!

The first element in an episcopal Installation is the *meeting* of the incoming Bishop. Perhaps the prominence given to *meetings* can best be seen in the Lord's Parable of the ten virgins who awaited the bridegroom,¹ with the multiple themes of *wakefulness*, *watchfulness*, *anticipation*, *expectation*, the *joy* of meeting a beloved guest, and the *unexpectedness* of the actual arrival (in a world without clocks, time tables, or emails). The episcopal Installation involves a procession of acolytes and clergy, the former with "lanterns, tapers, and the sacred Fans", and the investment of the incoming Bishop with his episcopal mantiya and staff. Those familiar with the images given in the New Testament will find themselves on familiar ground with the rites of installing a new Hierarch.

A visiting Hierarch, representing the Synod of Bishops, prays for the incoming Bishop, that he will "become the *shepherd*", "*shepherding* his people with *good works* and . . . upright *instruction* . . ."

In addition to the image of the *shepherd* and *teacher*, the Bishop is seen as a successor of the *Apostles*, as Christ is recalled in the words of the *Dismissal Hymn of Pentecost*² as He "Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit" – in order to net the world. The Holy Spirit is addressed as the One Who "*provideth* all things . . .", Who "*poureth* forth prophecy" and "*perfecteth* the priesthood," Who "*taught* wisdom to the illiterate" and *revealed* "the fishermen as theologians" – "He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church." Breathtaking images, these!



In a litany early in the Installation Rite, the Deacon prays for the incoming Bishop who "hath been installed unto the care of [his diocese] and that *Christ our Chief Shepherd* shall be unto him a succour and help." Christ is caring for the Bishop, who is caring for his Diocese. Following this, the incoming Hierarch himself offers a prayer that Christ will give him a *blameless* pastorate, that he may become an *imitator of Christ, the true Shepherd*, an *irreproachable steward of the grace of the high priesthood, accomplishing [his] episcopal responsibilities without*

¹ St Matthew 25:1-13 (all scriptural citations are from the Cambridge Parallel Bible).

² Dismissal Hymn of Pentecost, Plagal Tone 4, Prayer Book, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, 2000, p. 196.

guilt and without condemnation, overseeing Christ's flock with godly love and in a God-pleasing manner, becoming an example unto the faithful.³

He prays that he will be "a *guide* for those in darkness, the *salt* that doth sanctify, a *rectifier* of the imprudent, a *teacher* of infants, an *instructor* of the young, a *good Samaritan* for those who are ill, a *staff* for those in great distress, a *refuge* for those who are wronged, a *support* for those advanced in age, a *comfort* for those in mourning . . ." – a litany of virtues filled with rich scriptural associations.

He prays finally that Christ will *Preserve . . . the fulness of [His] Church.*⁵

This prayer constitutes the first words that a Cathedral community hears from its new Hierarchy, speaking directly from his kathedra.⁶ The prayer's significance is not lost on any practicing Orthodox Christian. The new Bishop is speaking their language, even as he is speaking the language of the Bible. The themes are of decisive importance to the local Church – the Diocese in which the Bishop will exercise his oversight.⁷

Though few, the themes are heard again and again throughout the *Rite of Installation*, giving the community a clear vision of the episcopal ministry that is being inaugurated on their behalf – by the grace of God, *a ministry of service and of love.*

The *Rite of Installation* focuses all our attention on the meaning of *leadership* as it is enacted by the Saviour in the Gospel – the Saviour Who *washes His Disciples' feet.*⁸

Leadership, detached from the reality of *washing the feet of others*, is no longer *Christian leadership*. It has become something else. It has turned into merely worldly *rank and privilege*, to *status and attitude*. Perhaps our own reduced circumstances, and the contempt of contemporary secularists, have actually facilitated a return to an evangelical understanding of *leadership*, with the *Christ of the Gospels* as its source, its inspiration and its goal. If so, then *glory to God for reduced circumstances!*

It cannot be lost on anyone charged with responsibility within the Body of Christ (*the Church*⁹), that what the

3 Prayer of Installation, end of Divine Liturgy, when the new Bishop ascends his kathedra.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Καθεδρα - the Bishop's seat within the Church.

7 The title Bishop of course derives from the Greek επισκοπος (episkopos), meaning over-seer.

8 St John 13: 4-17 - "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Our own amazement concerning this washing of feet must approach the disconcerted amazement of St Peter!

9 Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18 and 1:24; Ephesians 1:23, 4:11-12 and 5:23.

Lord demands of any disciple is moral *obedience*¹⁰ to His word about *servicing others* – a service that may inconvenience us, even if it is no more than bearing with one whose health has failed¹¹ – or washing someone's feet! In attending to the needs of others, we encounter the Lord Himself.¹² How else can we fathom His teaching, *I was sick and ye visited Me?*¹³

The Lord's *Parable of the Good Samaritan*¹⁴ reveals the same truth, defining the term *neighbour* by revealing that it belongs to the one who shows *active compassionate love* for others. It is not lost on us that this teaching comes in response to the question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* The *question* should have us on the edge of our seat; the *answer* should bring us to our feet!

In this Parable, perhaps one of the most celebrated in the entire Bible, we encounter both those who pass by on the other side of the road¹⁵ in order not to inconvenience themselves by noticing the plight of the man in the ditch, and the one who, by contrast, threw convenience – *and his own agenda* – right out the window,¹⁶ in order to be obedient to *another agenda* entirely, an agenda that leads to eternal life.

Clearly one best serves his own best interests by serving the interests of someone other than himself, no matter how inconvenient that service may be, even at the cost of sacrificing one's own agenda! At the end of the day, Christ shows us that the one who serves others is a leader indeed.¹⁷

In the gift of this remarkable teaching – given, remember, as *The Answer* to the question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* – Christ turns our worldly ways of thinking and our careful, self-serving arrangements upside down, inside out, and backwards – *yet again!*

✠Bishop Sergios of Portland, the Newly-Installed Saint Gregory of Sinai Monastery
Feast of Saint Lazaros, the Friend of Christ

10 Note the Saviour's word to His Disciples, ye should do as I have done . . . cited in footnote 7.

11 I was sick, and ye visited Me. St Matthew 25:36.

12 Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. St Matthew 25:40.

13 St Matthew 25:36.

14 St Luke 10:25-37.

15 St Luke 10:31-32, that is, the Priest and the Levite.

16 St Luke 10:33, that is, the Samaritan.

17 St Matthew 20:28; St Mark 10:45.

Άξιος! Άξιος! Άξιος!
Εις πολλά έτη Δέσποτα Σέργιοσ!
Многая лета Владыка Сергей!
Many years, Bishop Sergios!