



# The Bishop:

From the Holy Bible, The Holy Traditions and Early Fathers

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**B**ishops are the highest order of ministers in the Christian Church. The word is an Anglo-Saxon corruption of the word “episcopos.”

Bishops are considered the successors of the Apostles, and from the historical point of view, the episcopate is a continuation of the apostolate. Thus the Bishop is to represent the localizing of the prophetic, teaching, and liturgical functions of the original apostolate. He becomes the center of the Church’s life, the living witness and guardian of its faith.

Exactly how it came about that a single Bishop should succeed to power? The answer will be part of what I will try—in the light of the New Testament, the teaching of the Apostles, and the writings of the Early Fathers—to explain within this article.

Much may be explained by the occasional settling of an Apostle of the original missionary ministry in some locality. As the Apostles began to settle down in the communities during the second century, they became monarchical guardians, chief administrative officers, judges, teachers, and liturgical presidents of the growing local Christian communities.

As the Christian faith flourished, the Christian Monarch, out of necessity, was forced to delegate his powers to Baptize, reconcile and preside at the



*“Christ the Pantocrator (Bishop sitting on His throne)”*

Eucharist, through ordination, first to Bishops, then to priests (Presbyters). In the beginning, delegation to the priests was an emergency measure, but as the Church expanded, it became the norm. It is clear, however, that the development was orderly and it was very widespread by the time of St Ignatius.

## The Bishop in the New Testament:

From the Antioch mission of the Jerusalem Church we receive some important clues concerning the organization of the early Christian community. Upon hearing the news of large conversions in Antioch, the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas as an Apostle (Acts 11:20-22) to organize the Christian community there. Together with Saul, Barnabas will form the Ekklesia there, which was the first community to be called Christian.

There in the infant Church, two forms of organizations were developed: At Jerusalem the Church was governed by a Sanhedrin of Presbyters under the presidency of St James, while in Antioch the Christian community was under a delegated Apostle, living temporarily in the community in order to organize it.

As for St Paul, having seen the risen Lord Jesus Christ, he was personally commissioned by Him as an Apostle to preach the Holy Gospel to the gentiles (Galatians 1:11-16; I Corinthians 15:8-10). We find St Paul sent off as a missionary by the Church of



# Be Anxious for Nothing

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Antioch (II Corinthians 11:13). As a Christian Apostle, St Paul assumes many tasks. He judges (I Corinthians 5:1-13), reconciles (II Corinthians 1:23-2:11), punishes, admonishes not to take differences to the civil courts (I Corinthians 6:18), settles marriage problems (I Corinthians 8), and raises funds (I Corinthians 16:1-4); (II Corinthians 8-9). St Paul's primary apostolic duty was to proclaim the Holy Gospel, sharing in the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Once the mission was established, he acted as judge, counselor, teacher, liturgical president, reconciler, but always as the servant of the Christian community.

It is the Pastoral Epistles to St Timothy and Titus we see that the Bishop (Episkopos) presides over the Christian community. Guiding the family of God as a Father. He is the administrator of the ekklesia and the pastor of the flock. As the official representative of the Church (I Timothy 3:1-7) and head of the Christian family, he receives traveling Christian hospitality, has charge of the collection and distribution of alms. More over, he must be knowledgeable in doctrine, for teaching and guarding the tradition are his major responsibilities (Titus 1:9). As God's steward, he oversees the evangelic growth. He is the presiding elder, father, guardian, judge, teacher, administrator, exemplar, and the one who has the authority for the laying of the hands (ordaining priests and deacons).

The Seven Angels of the Seven Churches of the Holy Book of Revelation (Revelation 2-3) are commonly interpreted as the local Church Bishops in whom St John sees the Incarnation of Church Unity.

The heavenly throne and the 24 priests of The Holy Book of Revelation (Revelation 4:2-4) has been seen as reflecting the early Christian Divine Liturgy, perhaps at Ephesus, where the president (the Bishop) sat on his throne clad in white clothing.

"Be anxious for nothing," (Phil 4:6-7)  
Over and over You tell me,  
"Don't worry about your future,  
My son, with all your heart trust Me." (Prov 3:5-6)  
"Don't be concerned about tomorrow. (Matt 6:34)  
Let tomorrow worry about its own. (Matt 6:34)  
Remember what I've done in your past  
Remember how My power, to you I've shown.

I know the plans I have for you (Jer 29:11)  
Plans that give you hope and peace (Jer 29:11)  
Plans to bring you closer to Me  
Then you will see love and care that never cease. (Jer 31:3)

I know what you want before you ask, (Matt 6:8)  
And I supply all your need. (Phil 4:19)  
Let your requests be made known to Me (Phil 4:6-7)  
And be amazed at what will proceed:

Peace surpassing all understanding... (Phil 4:6-7)  
A protective guard on your mind and heart... (Phil 4:6-7)  
A fearless life when you hold My hand...  
A changed life will immediately start.

My son, be still, and know that I am God (Ps 46:10)  
Know that I hold your future, like I held your past. (Ps 139:16)  
All you have to do is be still...  
Be still, My son... Be still and hold fast.

Where is your faith, My child? (Matt 8:26)  
Why don't you look at what I've done before?  
I've walked My people through the Red Sea. (Ex 14:21-22)  
Could I not walk you through days galore?!!

Fear not, I AM your Father. (Luke 12:32)  
Fear not, My little flock. (Luke 12:32)  
Fear not a roaring lion. (1 Pet 5:8)  
Fear not: I AM your Rock. (Ps 118:2)

Even if a mother forgets her child, (Is 49:15)  
You, My son, I could never forget. (Is 49:15)  
See, I've inscribed you on the palms of My hands, (Is 49:16)  
I carved you by nails; that I never regret.

Fear not, for I have redeemed you, (Is 43:1)  
Yes, I called you by your name. (Is 43:1)  
You are very precious in My sight, (Is 43:5)  
And you... My son, I claim." (Is 43:1)

I finally see (Job 42:5)  
And I believe. (Mark 9:24)  
Lord, I shed my tears, (Mark 9:24)  
Help my unbelief. (Mark 9:24)