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Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas: An ordination into diaconate in Philadelphia



Between October 31 and November 1, 2020 His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Nicolae of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the United States of America and Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas visited the Holy Trinity Parish of Philadelphia, PA. The program of the visit first included the Vespers Service, on Saturday evening, October 31. On this occasion the Archbishop addressed a short sermon to those present.

The next day, on Sunday, November 1, starting with 10.00 am, the Divine Liturgy was served, during which His Eminence ordained the theologian Petru Bogdan Manea, the cantor of the church, as deacon. Along with His Eminence also served Archpriest Daniel Ene, Secretary of the Archdiocesan Council and parish priest of the Holy Trinity Church of Victor (Rochester Township), NY, Father Emmanuel Pratsinakis, a former parish priest of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Thomas in Cherry Hill, NJ, a close friend of Philadelphia. The group of priests was completed by Father Timotei Avram and Father Nicolai Buga, the parish priest of the church.

By receiving the grace of the diakonia, Mr. Petru Bogdan Manea chose to serve God and the Church. The very term deacon (in Greek, διάκονος) reminds by its meaning in the original language (“the one who serves”) that the one who receives the diaconate assumes both the service of God and the service of men. The Diaconate reminds us of the tribe of Levi, whom Moses chose to dedicate to religious worship (Ezekiel 44: 11-15). Even though initially the deacons chosen by the Holy Apostles had the task of organizing Christian agapes and serving meals in the New Testament, the term διάκονος, which appears in Philippians 1:1 and Romans 15:8, refers to and focuses on the fulfillment of spiritual duties of these church ministers. Service now becomes a privilege, not a burden or chore, the privilege of helping others to hear, to see, but also to respond to the word of divine Truth in the sacramental life of the Church.

By instituting the priesthood and the diaconate, the Savior unites them and establishes them in His own “sending” and ministry: “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.” The Lord Himself had said before that He was “sent,” for “I do not do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 5:30). The early Church preserved and continued the tradition of diaconate.

As it has come down to us, the ritual of receiving the grace of the diaconate includes several emotional moments, through which went our new deacon, Father Petru Bogdan. The first is that of ordination as *reader*. This moment takes place in the nave, before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy and includes first the ritual trimming and then the utterance by the Bishop of the prayer of ordination as reader (“Lord God Almighty, choose Your servant this...”), after which the candidate receives the specific garments, that is, the sticharion, but not before being subjected to the test of reading the Apostle.

To be ordained a *subdeacon*, he then kneels before the Bishop, who reads the prayer “Lord our God, the One through the same Holy Spirit...” As a symbol of the ministry he wishes to assume in the Church, the future deacon then helps the

Bishop to wash his hands, pouring water three times and answering the three-fold question "How many of you are faithful?"

The second important moment, which takes place during the Divine Liturgy, is the ordination as a deacon itself. After the moment of singing the Axion, the candidate for diaconate is led into the middle of the Church, where he makes three prostrations. Brought by the priests before the royal doors, where the bishop is, they say: "Command, Most Holy Master, the one who is brought before you to be ordained a deacon." Entering the Holy Altar through the royal doors, the candidate is taken by the hands of priests / deacons, all surrounding the holy altar three times and singing the same hymns as at the wedding (although not in the same order). By this it is shown that the ordination is nothing but the marriage of the new servant to the Church of Christ, in whose service he now enters. At the first circuit, for example, the "*O, Holy Martyrs ...*" are sung, because from now on he enters the company of those who confessed Christ and served Him, preaching His word. Then, the bishop comes before the royal doors, and, facing the people, offers to the new deacon the Orarion, the Cuffs and the Fan, saying three times (in Romanian, in Greek and Latin): "He is worthy!" The people always answer: "He is worthy!"

Of course, there are other memorable moments. One of them is the communion of the new deacon for the first time, as a servant. Thus, he has the honor of receiving the Eucharist before all the other deacons serving on that day. Then, towards the end, he will utter the litany: "Let us be attentive! Having partaken of the divine, holy, pure, immortal, heavenly, life giving, and awesome Mysteries of Christ, let us worthily give thanks the Lord!"

The Divine Liturgy ended with a beautiful sermon of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae on the text of the Holy Gospel (Luke 16, 19-31): *“The rich man of today’s Gospel did not go to hell just because he was rich, but because he did not know how to use his wealth, he considered it his own exclusively, he considered that what he has belongs to him and it is not appropriate to share it with others. He ignored others, he did not see disease, he did not see suffering, he did not see poverty and he lived a luxurious life. He behaved as if he were the master of this world and around him he could not see or hear, he could not see poverty and he could not hear the cries of those who asked for help. He did not know how to see God’s gift in treasures. Poor Lazarus, whose name means the Lord is my helper, both by name and by the silence presented in the parable, endured with faith and hope, with faith that this is God’s trial for his life, sickness, and helplessness. And with the hope that this patience of the disease will be rewarded, which happened in the afterlife.”*

The celebration ended with a dinner in honor of His Eminence Nicolae, offered by the family of the new Deacon Petru Bogdan. The priests and believers of the Holy Trinity Parish of Philadelphia, PA congratulate Father Deacon Petru Bogdan Manea, wishing him many years, with fruitful service in the Church of Christ!

He is worthy! Axios! Dignus is!

Prof. Fr. Nicolai Buga

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