

Ks. Józef GRZYWACZEWSKI
(Paris, Séminaire Polonais)

BISHOP APPOINTING IN THE PATRISTIC TIME

(Part II)

Several years ago *The Year for Priests*, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI (the 19th June 2009), was celebrated. It was connected to the 150th anniversary of the death of John Vianney from Ars (1859). That year gave the opportunity to make studies on the role of the priest ministry in the Church. In the Christian priesthood there are three degrees: episcopacy, presbyterate and diaconate. Many theologians of the first centuries were bishops or priests, some of them were deacons. The Fathers of the Church wrote a lot about the priesthood¹. In the patristic time, the formation of the clergy and the rules of the bishop appointing were different in comparison with our epoch. In the first part of this article, published in „Vox Patrum” 30 (2010) t. 55, 233-256, we presented three degrees of the priesthood, the question of the marriage and celibacy of the Church ministers, and the passage of some persons from a monastery to a bishop see. The second part of the article is consecrated to three questions: passage of some persons from a public function to the episcopacy, pressure on the candidates for priesthood and episcopacy, and becoming bishop by designation.

IV. FROM PUBLIC FUNCTION TO THE EPISCOPACY

In the patristic time there were men who passed to the service of the Church after having exercised a public function.

1. The case of Synesius of Cyrene. Synesius of Cyrene was known as a Neoplatonic philosopher; he was descendant from an ancient Greek family, he was not Christian, but his wife was Christian. In spite of his academic activities, he was active in public life. In the time of the barbarian invasions on the Greek territory, he was delegated by his countrymen to Constantinople to ask for help from the emperor. He spent about two years in Constantinople, but finally

¹ Cf. E. Stanula, *Patrystyczna literatura o kapłaństwie. Przegląd bibliograficzny*, VoxP 13-15 (1993-1995) t. 24-29, p. 49-58.

achieved his goal². He came back with satisfaction and received recognition from the people of his country. Because there were always many things to arrange in political and social matters, the people wanted him as their representative in the relations with civil authorities, included the emperor himself. Because in that time the bishop had the possibility to meet the emperor, the inhabitants of Ptolemais proposed to Synesius to become their bishop. „Having won the confidence and affection of his fellow-countrymen by a successful embassy to the imperial court at Constantinople c. 410 he was chosen bishop of Ptolemais. At first he hesitated, wishing to continue living with his wife and to retrain certain of his philosophical beliefs, e.g. in the pre-existence of the soul and in the eternity of the world. Without engaging himself to give up either his wife or his doctrine, he was consecrated by Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria”³.

Synesius represented the Roman and Greek patriotism *theologically* interpreted: „In the political works, we find the old monotheistic idealism of the Empire, with a general belief in God’s providential favor [...]. The Roman Empire had always been a divine institution which owed its success and stability to the gods or God”⁴. According to such a vision, the emperor should be a philosopher, as Plato. In fact, there were not many emperors who could be considered as philosophers.

The belief of Synesius could be understood as a synthesis (or mixture) of the Platonic philosophy and of the Christian teaching: „Synesius shared with pagan and Christian philosophers the ideal of freedom from passion and contemplations of the divine. In his treatise *On Dreams*, he shows more tendencies of a pagan Neoplatonic nature [...]. But the *Hymns* indicate how little difference he saw between his lifelong philosophic theism and his Christianity. Whether he uses Christian or pagan imagery and devotional language, or a mixture of the two, his piety is much the same. There is no abrupt transition in style or content or atmosphere. Whether addressing God as ‘Master of the thunderbolt, higher than the gods’, as in pagan hymns to Zeus, or as ‘Source of the Son, Form of the Father’, or ‘God the glorious Son of the eternal God’, the same basic spirituality is present, and when the Platonic Trinity becomes a Christian Trinity is by no means clear”⁵.

² Cf. H. von Campenhausen, *Les Pères grecs*, transl. O. Marbach, Paris 1963, p. 174: „La province, gravement meurtrie par les incursions répétées des tribus du désert, cruellement exploitée par des fonctionnaires incapables et insuffisamment protégée, avait besoin d’une détaxe d’impôts ; celle-ci ne pouvait être obtenue qu’auprès de l’Instance suprême, à la Cour impériale. Synésios entreprit cette mission qui, durant trois ans, devait le retenir à Constantinople [...]. Jeune noble, riche et spirituel, Synésios apprit à Constantinople à évoluer dans la plus haute société, à entrer dans les manoeuvres complexes de la diplomatie de cour”.

³ *Synesius of Cyrene*, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (= ODChCh), ed. E.A. Livingstone, Oxford 1997, 1568.

⁴ F.M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, London 1983, p. 177.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

Having such understanding of philosophy and of Christianity, he could declare before his ordination:

„The philosophic mind, albeit the discerner of truth admits the employment of falsehood [...], this false may be beneficial for the populace, and the truth may be injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of the real being [...]. I can take over the holy office on condition that I may prosecute philosophy at home, and spread legends abroad”⁶.

So, he did not want to be a Christian priest in the strict sense of this term, he preferred to be regarded as a servant of the Truth. His *god* was philosophy, his *temple* was the Roman Empire, but he was ready *to use* the pastoral activities of the Catholic Church as a method for *his own* service. We can suppose that he understood the Christian teaching, based on the Bible as a kind of collection of legends which express the Truth. In this sense, philosophy and religion may have the same aim and object: research and proclamation of the Truth, but they differ in methods.

It seems that he kept fidelity to such principle during his whole life: „As a bishop, Synesios acquired the ecclesiastical habit of objecting to deviations from orthodoxy and proper moral standards, and he had a healthy respect for his office a priest of God”⁷. Indeed, in the time of theological controversies, he was never accused, neither of heresy, nor of moral deviations; nobody noticed by him any innovations in the Liturgy. So, pursuing his philosophical researches, he has respected the norms of the Church: in morality, in teaching and in celebration.

Surely, that was an extraordinary case: the candidate was not Christian; he was married and did not want to be separated from his wife. As a philosopher, he kept his opinions which were not conforming (in all points) to the Christian faith. All this was not considered as obstacle to appoint him as a bishop, because he was respected by the people. It is to be noticed that such a choice was accepted by the Patriarch of Alexandria. The historian Evagrius Scholasticus relates this event in positive terms. He says that Synesius was admired because of his erudition, and – demanded by the people to become a bishop – he accepted „the salutary regeneration” that means the baptism⁸. But it was known that he did not believe in resurrection. Evagrius says that people hoped that the grace of God would compensate progressively for the lack of his faith because of his qualities. Generally, the historian concludes, that it was a good choice: Synesius worked properly as a pastor, he interceded for the people to

⁶ Synesius Cyrensis, *Epistula* 5, PG 66, 1342-1344, quoted from Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, p. 177.

⁷ Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, p. 176.

⁸ According to the advice of Saint Paul (1Tm 3, 6-7), the Council of Nicaea (325) has forbidden to ordain bishop a neophyte (can. 2). Such a possibility was admitted by the collection called *Apostolic Canons* (can 80). This collection is supposed to be composed ca 350-380 (ODChCh, p. 89). J. Hefele explains this problem and gives the list of bishops who were ordained in a short time after their baptism (*Histoire des conciles*, vol. I/1, Paris 1907, p. 532-536).

the emperor, and his writings were appreciated by the Christians of that time⁹. Many of them have been conserved until our time. It signifies that they were read and copied. In that difficult time for the Roman Empire, people wanted to see in the person of the bishop a pastor in spiritual matters and a leader of the local community as well, because bishops had great authority in the society¹⁰.

The situation in the western part of the Roman Empire was similar: because of troubles in politics people needed leaders, for this reason the *political qualities* of the bishops were especially appreciated. Surely, the faithful appreciated Christian virtues like faith, charity, righteousness and honesty as well. In the West, bishops had authority among barbarian authorities. Euric, the king of Visigoths, having his residence in Toulouse, was going to attack the northern part of Italy. There have always been border conflicts in that period. The whole western part of Europe was emerged in battles. At that time Italy was governed by Emperor Julius Nepos (474-475). Epiphanius, the bishop of Ticinium decided to negotiate with Euric and Nepos. Thanks to his mediation and advice they concluded the act of pacific coexistence (475)¹¹. Ticinium is now Pavia, in Italy. In such situation, if the candidate for episcopacy had qualities corresponding to the needs of the society, the questions like marriage or position in theological questions seemed not to be very important to the people.

2. The case of Ambrose of Milan. Ambrose bishop election was significant for his epoch. He was a catechumen, i.e. confessed the Christian faith, without being baptized. As a Roman consul, responsible of the provinces of Liguria and Aemilia, he entered the church in Milan during the bishop election for this city; there were tensions among the Christians because of the Arian heresy. Ambrose wanted to avoid trouble and to assure peace. Then, according to his biographer, he was proclaimed bishop himself by the people gathered in the church:

„And there while he was addressing the populace, the voice of a child is said to have suddenly cried out among the people: «Ambrose Bishop» (*Ambrosium episcopum*). Thus those who disagreed most violently before, because both the Arians and the Catholics (*ariani et catholici*) wished the other party to be defeated and a bishop of their own to be appointed, suddenly insisted in this one man with miraculous and incredible harmony”¹².

⁹ Cf. Evagrius Scholasticus, HE I 15, PG 86/2, 2464.

¹⁰ Cf. Von Campenhausen, *Les Pères grecs*, p. 178: „Selon la coutume et le droit de l'époque, l'évêque était le personnage le plus important et le plus influent dans toutes les sphères de la vie publique, ses activités ne se limitaient pas aux seuls domaines religieux, au sens étroit du mot. C'est lui qui assumait les devoirs de l'assistance sociale et, en partie du moins, administrait la justice ; il était seul à pouvoir prendre la parole sans qu'on lui imposât silence ; il n'y avait que lui qui pouvait résister à l'arbitraire des employés du fisc et de la bureaucratie impériale”.

¹¹ Cf. Paulinus Diaconus, *Historia Romana* XV 5, PL 95, 973.

¹² Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii* 3, 6, PL 14, 29A, transl. M.S. Kaniecka: *The Life of Saint Ambrose Bishop of Milan written by his Secretary Paulinus to Blessed Augustine*, Washington 1928, p. 45.

Being satisfied with his public function, he had no intention to be a bishop. He found himself not worthy of this dignity because he was conscious that some decisions which he has taken as a consul were not conform to the Christian morality. The people knew some of his bad actions; they cried out: „Your sin be upon as” (*Peccatum tuum super nos*). Ambrose left the church confused. He realized that people knew his qualities and his faults as well. One can wonder why the Arians agreed to ordain him bishop. Perhaps they respected him as a consul and they did not know exactly his position towards the Arian doctrine. They could suppose that he, because of his belonging to the state administration, would be favourable for the Arian group, like many persons from the imperial court. Ambrose, surprised by the proclamation of the people, did not know what to do. He could not assume the bishop ministry without permission of the emperor because he was still in public function. He decided to hide, but it was without effect:

„Since he intended to proceed to Ticinium, in the morning he was found at the gate city of Milan which is called Roman; for God, who is preparing a bulwark for his Catholic Church against its enemies and erecting a tower of David against the face of Damascus, that is, the faithlessness of the heretics, prevented his flight. After he was found and while he was being guarded by the people, a relation was sent to the most kind Emperor Valentinian, who heard with the greatest joy that the judges (*iudices*) sent by him were sought for episcopacy. Probus the Prefect also was rejoiced because, he said to him: «Go, act not as judge but as bishop» (*age, non ut iudex sed ut episcopus*)¹³.

So, Ambrose was allowed to leave his duty of consul, but he hesitated to be ordained bishop:

„He again prepared for flight and hid himself for some time on the estate of a certain Honorable Leontius. But he was betrayed by the same Leontius [...]. And so when being handed over to Milan he recognized the will of God toward him, and that he could not resist longer, he demanded that he should not be baptized save by a Catholic bishop; for he carefully guarded against the heresy of the Arians. And so on being baptized he is said to have fulfilled all the ecclesiastical offices and on the eight day was consecrated bishop with the greatest joy of all¹⁴.

It was in 374. Even if the story of his hesitation is exaggerated to amplify his modesty, according to the rules of the antic biography, the fact was that Ambrose did not think about any service of the Church. It is true that he was not baptized. And in spite of all that he was suddenly proclaimed bishop by the

¹³ Ibidem 3, 8, PL 14, 29CD, transl. Kaniecka, p. 47.

¹⁴ Ibidem 3, 9, PL 14, 30A, transl. Kaniecka, p. 47.

Christian community of Milan¹⁵. Finally, he accepted the choice of the people as the will of God. As we know, that was a very good choice. He was perhaps the unique person who was ordained bishop eight days after his baptism. The historians are not unanimous how to understand the statement of Paulinus:

„Baptizatus itaque fertur omnia ecclesiastica official implesse, atque octavo die episcopus ordinatus est”¹⁶.

Some of them suppose that he passed by all minor degrees of the priesthood; some of them, like Fischer, present the opinion that he received only the baptism and the bishop consecration¹⁷.

Ambrose accomplished many actions for the Church and for the Roman society of that time; he exercised his ministry not without suffering and not without opposition from his enemies. First of all, he had to confront the Arian heresy which came from the Greek part of the Empire and gained adepts in the West. Thanks to his efforts, Emperor Gratian accepted the Creed of Nicaea and took some decisions against the Arian heresy: „Theodosius had published a strongly worded edict which mandated Nicene Catholicism as the official religion of the Roman (eastern) Empire. Photinians, Arians and Eunomians were condemned by name and forbidden to hold assembly on threat of banishment. Only the Nicene faith, as ‘previously transmitted by our ancestors’ was to be maintained and observed as divine religion”¹⁸. As we know, Gratian passed to the history as one of the best emperors. Surely, Ambrose appreciated his positive attitude toward the Church and, as far as we know, gave inspiration to many of his decisions. Later he had to deal with success with emperor Theodosius. His famous conflict with him after the events in Thessalonica is known very well. Historians and poets wrote a lot about it¹⁹.

3. The case of Sidonius Apollinaris. Another man who passed from the public service to the Church was Sidonius Apollinaris. He was born in an aristocratic family in Gaul (c. 430). After having received an education on

¹⁵ Cf. H. von Campenhausen, *Les Pères latins*, Paris 1967, p. 112 : „Ambroise assure avoir été tout à fait surpris, et il tenta d’abord de se soustraire à l’élection [...] à l’époque il n’était pas encore baptisé; en outre, il ne pouvait répondre à cette vocation sans avoir l’accord de l’empereur”; H.R. Drobner, *Les Pères de l’Eglise*, Paris 1999, p. 336-338.

¹⁶ Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii* 3, 9, PL 14, 30A.

¹⁷ Cf. B. Fischer, *Hat Ambrosius von Mailand in der Woche zwischen seiner Taufe un seiner Bischofskonsekration andere Weißen empfangen?*, in: *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. Granfield – J. Jungmann, vol. 2, Münster 1970, p. 527-531.

¹⁸ D.H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the end of the Nicene-Arian conflicts*, Oxford 1995, p. 165; *ibidem*, p. 154: „Gratians’ favourable acceptance of De fide I-II provided a welcome relief to Ambrose. Not only did the emperor show himself sympathetic to Nicene theology, but he was personally supportive of Ambrose’s authority as one who teaches true doctrine”.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Grzywaczewski, *Saint Ambrose of Milan as a defender of the faith in the Greek hymnography*, *VoxP* 28 (2008) t. 52/1, 284-313.

literature and rhetoric, he entered the public activity, like many other persons of his rank. He was married with Papianilla, a daughter of Avitus, the prefect of Gaul, who was proclaimed emperor (455), without being accepted by Constantinople. The Roman aristocracy didn't have much confidence in him, he was suspected to be a *Germanic creature*. Indeed, he had good relationship with the Visigoths. Sidonius pronounced a panegyric in honour of the new emperor and his father-in-law²⁰ and started to work for him. After his dethronement (456), he accepted to work for Majorianus (458), and then for his successor Anthemius who named him prefect of Rome (461). But this was the time of trouble; the Roman Empire was going to be ruined (476). Finally Sidonius gave up his secular responsibilities, came back to Gaul (469) and became a bishop (471). Probably his was encouraged by his friends to take this decision; there were many patricians who became bishops.

As we know from historical sources, „the episcopate was not an obvious option for retired prefects. Bishops in Gaul in the fifth century and earlier were drawn from men who could be loosely described as *domini nobiles* and who, or whose families, were leaders in their local communities. The assumption that the presence in Gallic cities of bishops drawn from closely connected families establishes the presence of something that Sidonius, *vir illustris*, would have recognized as an *aristocratic episcopate* fails to take account of social distinctions which were central to his thinking”²¹. Generally, „all people in the Roman empire saw an individual's position determined for life by membership in a kinship group”²². Like other bishops who were married before, he was obliged to take a vow of sexual continence²³. So, he resigned to the marital life, but he remained in touch with his family; with his wife Papianilla and with his children. The name of his son was Apollinaris, the name of his daughter was Roscia.

In his writing, poems and letters²⁴, he presented the Roman patriotism; in his young age he was fascinated by the political vision of the Roman Empire,

²⁰ Cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, PL 58, 639-748, transl. A. Loyen: Sidoine Apollinaire, *Poèmes*, Paris 2003; the panegyric on honor of Avitus (*Carmen* VI and VII, PL 58, 676-694, transl. ibidem, p. 54-78); in the same way, he pronounced a Panegyric on honor of Majorianus (*Carmen* V, PL 58, 659-676, transl. ibidem 25-51) and honor of Anthemius (*Carmen* I and II, PL 58, 639-658, transl. ibidem, p. 1-24); see also A. Loyen, *Recherches historiques sur les Panégyriques de Sidoine Apollinaire*, Paris 1956.

²¹ J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome*, Oxford 1994, p. 170.

²² B.J. Malina, *Social levels and daily life*, in: *The early Christian world*, ed. Ph.F. Esler, vol. 1, London 2000, p. 378.

²³ Cf. B. Brennan, „*Episcopae*” – *Bishops' wives viewed in VIth-century Gaul*, *ChH* 54 (1985) 311.

²⁴ Cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae*, PL 58, 443-640 vel MGHaa VIII 1-172, transl. A. Loyen: Sidoine Apollinaire, *Correspondance*, I-II, Paris 2003. There are 147 letters; some of them were really posted, some of them were only dedicated to the person indicated in the address. This collection of letters belongs to important sources for the history of France.

after its fall he emphasized the role of the antic culture (Latin and Greek) which was gradual Christianized²⁵. He was aware that the bishop ministry was a burden which he assumed without being properly prepared for it. He wrote to his uncle Apollinaris:

„As you know, the cares of an august profession have been imposed on me (*tantae professionis pondus*), unworthy (*miser*) though I am of such great honour. And it has been misery to me to have to teach what I have never myself learned, and to preach goodness before practising it; like a barren tree, I bear no fruit of good works, but scatter idle words like leaves”²⁶.

Surely, he had a general knowledge of Christianity, without having studied theology. In his correspondence, he made few references to the Bible. In spite of it, he made efforts to work for the Church according to his possibilities. We can imagine that, having a good formation on rhetoric, he was able to preach. Coming from the aristocracy, he was able to govern his property, and consequently his diocese. Gregory of Tours considered him as a very good pastor. After his death, he was deplored by the people²⁷. After the fall of Rome, only the bishop was able to intercede for the people of Gaul to the Germanic authorities. The bishops of that time were conscious of their responsibility for the Church and for the Gallo-Roman population. They wanted to be considered as Apostles of Christ and, in the same time, as representatives of the Antique culture.

There were some cases which may be considered as abuse, for example emperor Avitus (father-in-law of Sidonius), after his dethronement, „was compulsorily consecrated bishop of Placentia” in Italy. It was evident that he had no qualities for any Church ministry²⁸. He occupied his bishopric for a very short time. He left it, willing to return to Gaul; on the journey he died. Historians suppose that his enemies assassinated him²⁹. Surely, that was an extreme case.

²⁵ Cf. J. Grzywaczewski, *La culture romaine en Gaule au V^e siècle d'après Sidoine Apollinaire*, „Annales” (Paris) 10 (2007) 137: „Sidoine présente un *patriotisme de culture*, un patriotisme qui n'est pas lié à une région ou à une nation particulière. La *romanitas*, ce n'est pas un territoire, mais un système et une hiérarchie de valeurs”.

²⁶ Cf. Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistolae* V 3, 3, PL 58, 534.

²⁷ Cf. Gregorius Turonensis, *Historia Francorum* II 23, transl. R. Latouche: Grégoire de Tours, *Histoire des Francs*, Paris 1999, p. 111: „Mais il arriva après ces événements qu'une fièvre survenant il tomba malade. Il pria des siens de le porter à l'église. Quand il eût été transporté, une multitude d'hommes et de femmes, et également d'enfants, vint à lui en pleurant et en disant : 'Pourquoi nous délaisses-tu, bon pasteur, et à qui nous abandonnes-tu comme des orphelins ? Y aura-t-il pour nous une vie après ton trépas ? Y aura-t-il désormais quelqu'un qui nous assaisonnera du sel de la sagesse et nous incitera à la crainte du nom du Seigneur au moyen d'une intelligence telle que la tienne?’”.

²⁸ Cf. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris*, p. 80.

²⁹ Cf. E. Gibbon, *Histoire du déclin et de la chute de l'empire romain*, transl. M. Guizot, Paris 1983, p. 1049: „Par clémence ou par mépris, Ricimer permis au monarque déposé d'échanger son trône contre le titre plus désirable d'évêque de Placentia ; mais l'implacable ressentiment des sénateurs n'était pas satisfait, ils prononcèrent contre lui une sentence de mort. Avitus prit précipitam-

V. PRESSURE ON THE CANDIDATES FOR PRIESTHOOD AND EPISCOPACY

Nowadays we are accustomed to speak about liberty, especially in the context of marriage and of religious vocation. In the patristic epoch, we know many persons who, indeed, took personally decisions in their lives. But there were also many situations in which a man found himself obliged to become a priest or a bishop under pressure of his family or of other persons. In the same way, marriages were concluded by political or economic reasons without consent of young people.

1. Pressure on Paulinus to become a priest. Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis († 403) relates in his letter to John, the bishop of Jerusalem, how he ordained priest the monk Paulinus, who was brother of Saint Jerome:

„While, therefore, the Collect was being celebrated in the church of the villa which adjoins our monastery – he being quite ignorant and wholly unsuspecting of my purpose – I gave orders to a number of deacons to seize him and to stop his mouth, lest in his eagerness to free himself he might adjure me in the name of God, and forcing him to minister; for he made a hard struggle against it, crying out that he was unworthy, and protesting that this heavy burden was beyond his strength [...]. And when he has ministered in the offering of the holy sacrifices, once more with great difficulty I closed his mouth and ordained him presbyter. Then, using the same arguments, I conducted him in the place set apart for presbyters. After this I wrote the reverend presbyters and other brothers, chiding them for not having written to me about him. For a year before I had heard many of them complain that they had no one to celebrate for them the sacraments of the Lord”³⁰.

It is to be supposed that ordinations by physical force were rare. It is known that in that time the monks hesitated to be charged by the priest ministry in their community, maybe by modesty. Most of them had no theological preparation. It might happen that in a monastery there was no priest to celebrate the Mass. In such case, the monastic community asked the local bishop to send a priest to celebrate the Mass. It was not always easy. As far as we know, many bishops encouraged monks to accept the priest ministry for celebrating the Eucharist. So, the problem of Epiphanius was typical for that time, but his method of persuasion, i.e. a physical forcing was probably exceptional. Violent character of bishop Epiphanius is confirmed by other historical sources.

ment la fuite vers les Alpes [...]. Il périt sur la route, ou de maladie, ou de la main des bourreaux”.

³⁰ Epiphanius, *Epistula ad Joannem Hierosolymitanum* (this letter is conserved in Latin translation in the collection of the *Letters* of Jerome (*Letter* 51, 1, CSEL 54, 396-397), transl. W.H. Fremantle – G. Lewis – W.G. Martley: *The principal works of Saint Jerome*, in: *Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Ph. Schaff – H. Wace (= NPNF), Series II, vol. 6, Massachusetts 1999, p. 83.

2. Pressure on Pinianus to become a priest. Appointing of a Church minister by acclamation of the local community seems to be popular in some parts of the Roman Empire, especially in Africa. We know for example that the faithful of Hippo tried to put pressure on Pinianus, a reach man from Thagaste and married, to become a priest³¹. One day, he entered the church with his wife Melania for taking part in a prayer, maybe in the Mass. It was celebrated by Saint Augustine. Suddenly, the people started to cry: ‘Pinianus priest, Pinianus priest’, as in Milan the people cried: ‘Ambrose bishop’. Probably the inhabitants of Thagaste hoped that in the case of Pinianus’ ordination, his property would pass to their Christian community. Forced by the people in the church, he was ready to agree without conviction. Maybe he was afraid of being crushed with his wife. Maybe he thought that, when he accepts to be a priest, later he would be ordained bishop. So, he promised to be ordained priest. But the people not thrust him. Probably they noticed his lack of conviction.

Saint Augustine was *demande*d to testify his agreement by signature. In Antiquity people liked writing. Pinianus was going to put his name on the sheet of papyrus. Somebody must have brought it quickly to the church. At that moment Melania, shocked by the perspective to remain without husband and property, pulled the sheet from bishop’s hands out (and probably destroyed it). She might be a woman of courage. The people gathered in the church, astonished by her reaction, became silent. They have respected her protest. Then they stared to leave quietly the church. So, Pinianus has never been ordained priest. In that case, like in many others, especially the *world qualities* of the candidate were taken into consideration. It is not to be excluded that Pinianus could be a good Christian.

3. Pressure on Saint Augustine to become a priest and a bishop. There are documents which show the pressure of the community on Saint Augustine. He lived with a woman without being married and he had a son with her. The name of the woman is not known. The name of the son was Adeodatus, i.e. given by God. Augustine had a good social position as a teacher of rhetoric, but he was in an internal turmoil researching the truth. After his conversion, which he has described in details³², he was baptized in Milan by Saint Ambrose, together with his son (the 24th April 386), then returned from Italy to Africa. We read in his *Confessions*:

„Having left the country, we returned to Milan. Alipius also was pleased to be born again with me in Thee, being now clothed with the humility appropriate to Thy sacraments [...]. We took into our company the boy Adeodatus, born of me carnally, of my sin. You have made him well. He was barely fifteen years, yet in wit excellent grave and learned men [...]. That talent was

³¹ Cf. Augustinus, *Epistula* 125, 4-6, CSEL 44, 6-7, NPNF Ser I 1, 456-457.

³² Cf. Augustinus, *Confessiones* VIII 12.

a source of awe to me. And who was but Thou could be the worker of such marvels? Quickly You did remove his life from the earth”³³.

After the conversion, he separated himself from the woman. His son, apparently very intelligent, died in a short time after the baptism. Augustine wanted to enter the monastic life and consecrate himself to prayer and study. One day, he came to Hippo looking for a place for the small community which he founded, and there „he was seized by the aged bishop Valerius and ordained priest against his will”³⁴. It was in 391. It was the time of controversies with Donatists. The Church of Africa needed good pastors and preachers. Valerius, because of his Greek origin, was not able to preach in Latin properly³⁵. Augustine made a commemoration of this event in one of his letters:

„On the other hand, that if in the office of bishop, or priest, or deacon, the orders of the Captain of our salvation be observed, there is no work in this life more difficult, toilsome, and hazardous, especially in our day, but none at the same time more blessed in the sight of God. But what the proper mode of discharging these duties is, I did not learn either in boyhood or in the earlier years of manhood; and at the time when I was beginning to learn it, I was constrained as a just correction for my sins to accept the second place at the helm, when as yet I knew not how to handle an oar”³⁶.

Augustine accepted this charge with fear and tears. Having a good education in literature, on philosophy, on rhetoric and on the Holy Scripture, he was able to preach the Gospel and to refute theological errors. He was conscious of his intellectual capacities. But he was not ready to resign to the monastic life. In the day of his conversion, he was happy to have found the Truth and to have met Christ by faith. He desired to deepen his union with God by prayer and contemplation. Surely, he did not think about any ecclesiastical function.

Three years later (395), he was already known as a very good priest, respected by lay people and clergy. It was obvious that he was a zealous pastor. His bishop Valerius proposed him to be his bishop-coadjutor. Augustine agreed without enthusiasm³⁷. He was ordained bishop in 395 (or 396), even if

³³ Ibidem IX 6, 14, CCL 29, 140-141, transl. J.G. Pilkington, NPNF Ser I 1, 133-134.

³⁴ Cf. *Saint Augustine of Hippo*, in: ODChCh, p. 128.

³⁵ Cf. P. Brown, *La vie de saint Augustin*, transl. J.H. Marrou, Paris 1967, p. 162 : „Agé, Grec d'origine, il parlait latin avec difficulté [...]. Sa communauté manquait cruellement d'un porte-parole”.

³⁶ Augustinus, *Epistula* 21, 1, CSEL 34, 49-50, transl. J.G. Cunningham, NPNF Ser I 1, 237; cf. Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, PL 32, 31-66, transl. H.T. Weskotten: *The Life of Saint Augustine*, Princeton 1919.

³⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *Sermo* 355, 2, PL 38, 1569, transl. in : *Oeuvres complètes de saint Augustin*, dir. M. Raulx, vol. VIII, Paris 1869, p. 65: „J'ai cherché un endroit pour y établir un monastère où il me serait permis de vivre avec mes frères ; car j'avais renoncé alors à toutes les espérances du siècle ; je n'avais pas voulu de ce que j'y pouvais devenir, mais aussi n'avais je pas cherché ce que

such proceeding was not completely conforming to the tradition. We can imagine that Augustine was immediately accepted by the Christian community, but there was no formal (or true) election, as it was demanded by the Church. The Council of Nicaea took the following decision on this matter:

„It is by all means that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops in the province; but should this be difficult, either on account of urgent necessity or because of distance, there at least should meet together, and the suffrages of the absent bishops also being given and communicated in writing, then the ordination should take place. But in every province the ratification of what is done be left to the Metropolitan”³⁸.

After Valerius' death, Augustine became the bishop of Hippo (in 396 or 397). The Metropolitan and other bishops of the province have accepted him as a successor of Valerius without hesitation. Even the Donatists, who wanted one day to kill him, have never contested the legality of his bishop ordination. There is no doubt that Valerius has discovered the charisma of the converted master of rhetoric. He admired his erudition on theological matter. He desired that such a talented man serve the Church in that very difficult time. The choice was excellent: Augustine passed to the history as one of the most eminent personalities in Christianity, appreciated particularly in the Latin part of the Roman Empire.

4. Pressure on John Chrysostom to become a priest and a bishop. John called Chrysostom († 407), after his studies on rhetoric by Libanios decided to consecrate himself to the monastic life. He spent fourth years as a hermit among monks and two years in a deserted place as an anchorite. Then he returned to Antioch because of his health. The people wanted him to be a priest. He wrote about it in his *Treatise on the Priesthood*:

„Now while we were thus situated, he (his friend Basil) continually entreating, and I refusing my assent, we were both of us disturbed by a report suddenly reaching us that we were about to be advanced to the dignity of the episcopate. As soon as I heard this rumor, I was seized with alarm and perplexity; with alarm lest I should be made captive against my will, and perplexity, inquiring as often did whence any such idea concerning us could have entered the minds of these men; for looking to myself I found nothing worthy of such a honor. But the noble youth having come to me privately [...] for he would

je suis [...] sans choisir une première place à la table de mon Seigneur, j'y ai pris au contraire une place dernière et méprisée, et il lui a plu de me dire : 'Monte plus haut'. Je redoutais alors l'épiscopat au point de n'aller jamais où je savais qu'il manquait un évêque, car j'avais déjà quelque réputation parmi les serviteurs de Dieu”.

³⁸ *Concilium Nicaenum* (325) can. 4, Hefele I/1, 539-540, transl. R. Percival, NPNF Ser II 14, 11. Augustine's ordination was not conforming to the first part of the canon, but it was conforming to the second part: he was ordained by the Metropolitan himself.

readily follow me whichever course I might pursue, whether I attempted flight or submitted to be captured [...]. After a short time, when one who was to ordain us arrived, I kept myself concealed”³⁹.

Finally he agreed. He was ordained deacon (386) and then priest (386). In a short time he became a famous preacher. For this reason emperor Arcadius has decided to appoint him as the Patriarch of Constantinople. The capital of the Empire needed a good pastor and a good preacher. The Greeks have always appreciated rhetorical capacities of the priests and bishops. Supposing that John would resist, the emperor ordered to capture him by force and bring to the capital. Then, he commanded to *elect* him *according* to the ecclesiastical norms. Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria (398), was ordered to consecrate John „against his will”⁴⁰. It is to be noticed that the tradition of bishop election was so strong that the emperor, in spite of his theocratic power, did not dare to name by his own authority a new bishop for the capital. He ordered to *elect* John, so that his ordination could be considered as conforming to ecclesiastic norms.

John Chrysostom belongs to most famous theologians, preachers and reformers of the Liturgy. He was three times forced: first time to become deacon and priest, second time to assume the charge of episcopacy in Constantinople and third time to leave his bishop see. He was banished to Pontus (404) because of his conflict with empress Eudoxia. He had also problems with some monks. D. Caner writes: „Chrysostom proved so harsh toward many ascetics that they actively supported his deposition from Episcopal office in 403. Soon after becoming bishop of Constantinople in 398 he came into conflict with Isaac, the leading monastic figure in the city at the time”⁴¹. All cases of forcing for priesthood and episcopacy, above reported, should be understood in the context of that epoch in which, generally, the personal liberty was not as respected as it is in our time.

VI. BISHOP BY DESIGNATION

As far as we know from historical sources, in the early Church there was no unified system of bishop recruitment. In most of the cases, the candidate was elected by the Christian community, sometimes – as we presented above – a kind of forcing, moral or physical, was applied.

1. Designation of Gregory of Nazianzus. We know that in some situations it was admitted to appoint a bishop by designation. That was the intention of Gregory’s father who was the bishop of Nazianzus. He encouraged his son

³⁹ Joannes Chrysostomus, *De sacerdotio* I 6, SCh 272, 88-90, transl. W.R.W. Stephens, NPNF Ser I 9, 35.

⁴⁰ Cf. *John Chrysostom*, in: ODChCh, p. 342.

⁴¹ D. Caner, *Wandering, begging monks, spiritual authority and the promotion of monasticism in late antiquity*, Berkeley 2002, p. 169.

to become a priest in the hope that he would help him in the pastoral work. Gregory agreed by respect to his father (361)⁴², but a little later, maybe impressed by his new dignity, he fled from Nazianzus⁴³. After one year, he came back (362) and started to work with his father. He helped him indeed in his pastoral duties and in the administration of the diocese. Apparently he manifested a pastoral zeal. His friend Basil, the bishop of Caesarea, in accordance with his father, ordained him bishop and confided him the diocese of Sasima (372). That was a kind of designation or nomination. We have no information about his election. Probably the faithful of Sasima accepted the new bishop, because they knew his father and Basil of Caesarea.

In fact Gregory has never taken this bishopric; he preferred to stay in Nazianzus and help his father as his auxiliary bishop. After father's decease, he succeeded him, but for a short time. Then left his bishop ministry and went to a monastery in Seleucia. He wanted to live as a monk. He was already known as a famous theologian and a good preacher. It was the time of the Arian controversies. The community of Constantinople, exhausted by conflicts, invited him, knowing his qualities (379). He accepted this proposal and went to the imperial city. He has pronounced there his famous *Five Theological Orations* (27-31)⁴⁴.

His activity brought considerable effects in the renewal of the faith. The Arians were not able to oppose his teaching. The Council of Constantinople (381) designed him as the bishop of the capital. It seems that the lay people of Constantinople did not participate in this election. Gregory, influenced by his friends, assumed this charge. But his election (or designation) was contested by the bishops of Egypt and Macedonia, who came later to Constantinople. They tried to prove that Gregory's appointing as bishop of the capital was not conforming to the canonical norms⁴⁵.

The protestation of many bishops discouraged Gregory so much that he found himself obliged to retire (382)⁴⁶. He went back to Nazianzus to take the bishopric of his late father and occupied it during two years. But he was not satisfied with this ministry. After having resigned to this function (384), he went to his private estate in Arianzos and consecrated the rest of his life

⁴² Cf. *Gregory of Nazianzus*, in: ODChCh, p. 711.

⁴³ Cf. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Oratio* II (apologetica), PG 35, 408-514, transl. Ch.G. Browne – J.E. Swallow: *In Defence of his Flight to Pontus*, NPNF Ser II 7, 204-227.

⁴⁴ Cf. idem, *Orationes* 27-31, PG 36, 11-172, ed. P. Gallay, SCh 250 (Discours theologiques), transl.: *Five theological orations*, NPNF Ser II 7, 284-328.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Quasten, *Initiations aux Pères de l'Eglise*, transl. J. Laporte, vol. III, Paris 1962, p. 342 : „Le second concile oecuménique, que Théodosie convoqua et ouvrit à Constantinople en mai 381, reconnut Grégoire comme évêque de la capitale. Mais les évêques de l’Egypte et de Macédoine ayant contesté sa nomination pour des raisons canoniques et parce qu’elle avait été faite avant leur arrivée, il fut si découragé qu’il renonça au second siège de la chrétienté au bout de quelques jours”.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Oratio* 42, PG 36, 457-492, transl.: *The last farewell*, NPNF Ser II 7, 385-395.

to studies and writing. He died there in 390. In his case, the designation (or nomination) brought no success. That was the time of trouble, conflicts and controversies. Historians agree that he was a good theologian; surely, he possessed the charisma for monastic life, but he was not gifted with capacities for administration of the Church. Probably he was not able to deal with political matters. Such capacities were needed in the imperial city.

2. Designation of Eraclius. We have some examples of designation to episcopacy in Africa. When Augustine was advanced in age and was conscious that his life was going to the end, he decided to design his successor (426). He describes such a way of the appointing of the bishop of Milevi:

„Bishop Augustine said: ‘We all are mortal, and the day which shall be the last of life on earth is to every man at all uncertain [...]. I know that Churches can be disturbed after the decease of their bishops by ambitious or contentious parties, and I feel it to be my duty to take measures to prevent this community from suffering, in connection with my decease, that which I have often observed and lamented elsewhere. As you are aware, my bellowed, that I recently visited the Church of Milevi [...]. I went accordingly, and the Lord was in mercy pleased so to help us that they harmoniously accepted as bishop the person designed by their former bishop in his lifetime [...]. I now intimate to all here my desire, which I believe to be also the will of God: I wish to have for my successor the presbyter Eraclius’. The people shouted: ‘God be thanks! Christ be praised! (This was repeated twenty times)’⁴⁷.

As we said before, the bishop appointing by designation was not conforming to the Church canons, but it was admitted and tolerated by tradition. Augustine himself was chosen and designed to be the bishop of Hippo by his predecessor Valerius. He applied the same method to his successor. Indeed, after Augustine’s decease (430), Eraclius became the bishop of Hippo. Augustine wanted to avoid disturbance in the community after his death. First of all, he wanted to establish a catholic bishop in his city, not Arian one. The Church of Africa could have some autonomy in the way of bishop appointing⁴⁸.

As we can suppose, the bishop appointing by designation was not without weak points. We can imagine that the bishop advanced in age, physically weak, could be exposed to the intrigues of his surrounding: priests and deacons, aristocratic families, and people from his own family. For this reason, the Church demanded that the candidate for the bishop ministry should be elected by the Christian community.

There is a lot of information about bishops, priests, deacons, about their ministry in the first centuries, and about the juridical regulations concerning

⁴⁷ Augustinus, *Epistula* 213, 1, CSEL 57, 373-374, transl. J.G. Cunningham, NPNF Ser I 1, 569.

⁴⁸ Cf. Y. Duval, *L’Afrique: Aurélius et Augustin*, in: *Histoire du christianisme*, dir. J.M. Mayeur – Ch. et L. Pietri – A. Vauchez, vol. II, Paris 1995, p. 801- 809.

their appointing. In most of the cases, decisions on this matter were proclaimed by local synods and ecumenical Councils⁴⁹.

VII. REGULATIONS ON BISHOP ELECTION BY LEO THE GREAT

The proceeding of bishop election was complicated; sometimes it was difficult to avoid trouble. Because of abuses which happened in Gaul, Pope Leo the Great published the regulations as follows:

„I beg and entreat and beseech you in God’s name to remove all occasion for discord from your provinces. In peace and quietness should they be asked for who are to be priests. The consent of the clergy, the testimony of those held in honour, the approval of the orders and the laity should be required. He, who is to govern all, should be chosen by all. As we said before, each metropolitan should keep in his own hands the ordinations that occur in his own province, acting in concert with those who precede the rest in seniority of priesthood, a privilege restored to him through us. No man should claim for himself another’s rights. Each should keep within his own limits and boundaries, and should understand that he cannot pass on to another a privilege that belongs to himself [...]. The ordination should be performed not at random but on the proper day [...]. Our forefathers judged then the day of the Lord’s resurrection as alone worthy of the honour of being the occasion on which those who are to be made priest are given to God”⁵⁰.

The word priest (*sacerdos*) signifies in this context, like in many others patristic writings, bishop (*episcopus*). The same term (*sacerdos*) was used for both, priest and bishop, to emphasize that the priest participates in the priesthood of his bishop⁵¹. And the bishop has his priesthood from Christ. The Pope emphasized the responsibility of the whole community of the bishop election: the candidate should have a good opinion among people, the consent of the clergy should be required and the ordination should be performed under control of the metropolitan, acting in community with the bishops of the province. The best day for the ordination is Sunday as the commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, the true Shepherd and Priest.

As far as we know, in the Antiquity, the clergy had a significant influence on the bishop election. The role of the laity, great in the beginning, was diminish-

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d’après les documents originaux*, vol. I-III, Paris 1907-1910, transl.: *The seven Ecumenical Councils*, NPNF Ser II 14; *Les conciles oecuméniques*, dir. G. Alberigo, vol. I: *L’histoire*, vol. II: *Les décrets de Nicée I à Latran*, Paris 1994; *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych*, tekst grecki, łaciński, polski, dir. A. Baron – H. Pietras, Kraków 2001 (vol. I), 2002 (vol. II), 2003 (vol. III).

⁵⁰ Leo I Papa, *Epistula* 10 (ad episcopos Viennenses), 6, PL 54, 633-634, transl. Ch.L. Feltoe, NPNF Ser II 12, 11.

⁵¹ Cf. Stanula, *Patrystyczna literatura o kapłaństwie*, p. 66.

ing with the passing of time⁵². Election as the way of bishop appointing had its weak points. There have been always many candidates; each of them had friends and enemies who – sometimes – made trouble in the community during the electoral campaign. Probably every candidate had some virtues and weaknesses. Not every candidate, ordained bishop according the Church regulations, was able to fulfil properly his pastoral ministry. It has been always difficult to satisfy all members of the local community. In many situations it was difficult to deal with civil authorities; in the time of the Roman Empire and after its fall. In spite of all problems, the Church has always made efforts to exercise her mission of evangelisation which is connected to the priest and bishop ministry.

The hierarchy: deacon, presbyter, bishop exists since the apostolic and post-apostolic time. We can see it for example in the letters of saint Ignatius of Antioch. The bishop ministry has been always considered as very important in the Church. There were many ways to choose the candidates for the episcopacy. Normally, the candidates were chosen by the local community. In the beginning, those who were married were allowed to continue the marital life. Later the celibacy started to be connected to the priesthood. Generally, deacons and priests were allowed to be married, but the bishops were demanded to live in celibacy. The rules on this matter were fluent. There were different traditions in Church provinces. In the post-apostolic epoch, there was a tradition that a married man could be ordained deacon, priest and bishop. But any Church minister was allowed to marry. This tradition has been accepted by the Council of Nicaea (325).

Sometimes there were communities which wanted to have as bishop somebody who exercised a public function. That was the case of Synesius, of Ambrose, of Sydonius, and of some others. In many cases, the people more appreciated the administration capacity of the candidates for the episcopacy than their theological formation. Generally, the bishops were chosen among the men from high ranks of the society; it was important for the contacts with civil authorities, especially after the fall of the Roman Empire.

In the case of the death of a bishop, there were always many candidates to succeed him. Not all of them possessed qualities for the bishop ministry. It happened that the faithful proposed the bishop function to a man, who had no

⁵² Cf. E. Griffé, *La Gaule chrétienne à l'époque romaine*, vol. II: *L'Eglise des Gaules au V^e siècle*, Paris 1966, p. 214-215 : „Les clercs, prêtres et diacres surtout, occupaient dans la communauté des fidèles une place à part. Il parut naturel qu'ils eussent un rôle prépondérant dans le choix de l'évêque. C'est à eux qu'appartenait l'*electio* proprement dite. Ils n'y procédaient pas, semble-t-il, par un vote, mais ils devaient s'entendre sur un nom. Au dehors des clercs [...] seuls les membres de la classe dirigeante portaient un intérêt spécial à l'élection épiscopale [...]. Sans doute, le peuple (*plebs*) devait être convoqué à la réunion où serait proclamé le nom de l'élu, mais ce serait le plus souvent, pour acclamer le candidat proposé”.

intention to exercise such ministry. We mentioned several persons who were forced to be ordained, for example Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

Sometimes, an old bishop designed his successor, because he wanted to avoid disturbance after his death, especially if the local Church was divided in many fractions. In this way, Augustine became the bishop of Hippo. Such way of bishop appointing was tolerated by the Church, but not recommended. According to the regulations of the synods and of the Holy See, the candidate for the episcopacy should be elected by the community and approved by the bishops from the province. His ordination should be performed under authority of the metropolitan. As we know, each mode of bishop appointing had some strong and weak points. Generally, in the long history of the Church there have always been bishops, who failed to satisfy the expectations of the people, and there were bishops who fulfilled properly their ministry. The principal function of the bishop is to celebrate the Eucharist, to proclaim the Christian message and to organize the religious life in his diocese. The bishop – by remaining in the unity with other bishops and with the Pope – is a sign of the universality of the Church.

WYBÓR BISKUPA W OKRESIE PATRYSTYCZNYM

(Streszczenie)

W artykule podjęte zostało zagadnienie wyboru kandydata na biskupa. Kandydatów do posługi biskupiej szukano we wspólnocie chrześcijańskiej. Z kapłaństwem, a szczególnie z biskupstwem, wiąże się celibat. To zagadnienie poruszone zostało w pierwszej części artykułu. Zdarzało się, że na biskupa powoływano ludzi pełniących funkcje publiczne. W ten sposób wyświęcony został Synezjusz z Cyreny. Podobnie Ambroży został okrzyknięty biskupem, gdy jako rzymski konsul wszedł do kościoła w Mediolanie w czasie debaty nad wyborem pasterza dla tego miasta. Również Sydoniusz Apolinary, który był poprzednio prefektem Rzymu, gdy wrócił do Galii został wybrany na biskupa.

Wielokrotnie zdarzało się, że ten, kogo upatrzone na biskupa nie czuł się na siłach, by podjąć to odpowiedzialne stanowisko w Kościele i w społeczności; w takim przypadku stosowano perswazję (tak było w przypadku Sydoniusza oraz Ambrożego), a czasem nawet swego rodzaju przymus. Grzegorz z Nazjanzu przyjął godność biskupią, ponieważ nie potrafił sprzeciwić się presji swego ojca, który też był biskupem, Również św. Augustyn został kapłanem, a potem biskupem pod presją ówczesnego biskupa Hippony, a także wiernych świeckich.

Istniała tradycja, szczególnie w Afryce, że sędziwy biskup mógł wyznaczać swego następcę. Tak biskup Waleriusz wprowadził św. Augustyna na swoje miejsce, a potem Augustyn oświadczył publicznie wobec ludu, że jest jego życzeniem, by po jego śmierci stolicę w Hipponie objął Herakliusz, który wówczas był kapłanem. Podobnie, tuż przed śmiercią, św. Honorat wyznaczył Hilarego na biskupa Arles.

Każdy ze sposobów wybierania biskupa miał pozytywne i negatywne strony; żaden nie dawał gwarancji, że nowo mianowany biskup spełni oczekiwania wszystkich wierzących.

Ogólnie jednak liczba tych, którzy odpowiednio spełnili swe zadania jako biskupi była w okresie patrystycznym dość duża.

Do głównych zadań biskupa należało sprawowanie Eucharystii, nauczanie oraz organizowanie życia religijnego w diecezji, czasem należało angażować się w sprawy społeczne, a nawet polityczne. Biskup, przez to, że pozostawał w łączności z innymi biskupami oraz z Papieżem, był dla duchownych niższych stopni oraz dla wiernych świeckich znakiem jedności Kościoła oraz jego powszechności.

