

# THE DIRECTORY FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD

## CHAPTER I

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY

1. It is the duty of every one to remember the Lord's Day and to prepare for it before its approach. On the preceding day all worldly business should be so ordered by each person and seasonably laid aside that he may not be hindered thereby from sanctifying the Sabbath, as the Holy Scriptures require.

2. God commanded his Old Testament people to keep holy the last day of the week, but he sanctified the first day as the Sabbath by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. For this reason the church of the new dispensation has from the time of the apostles kept holy the first day of the week as the Lord's Day.

3. The whole day is to be kept holy to the Lord, and is to be employed primarily in the public and private exercises of religion. Therefore it is requisite that there be a holy resting all

the day from such labors and an abstaining from such thoughts, conversations and recreations as are not consonant with this end.

4. Let works of necessity on that day be so ordered that servants or others be not improperly detained from the public worship of God, nor otherwise hindered from sanctifying the Sabbath.

5. It is well for each family to prepare at the family altar for communion with God in his public ordinances by reading the Scriptures, by holy meditation and by prayer, especially for a blessing upon the ministry of the Word.

6. Although it is fitting and proper that the members of Christ's church meet for worship on other occasions also, which are left to the discretion of the particular churches, it is the sacred duty and high privilege of God's people everywhere to convene for public worship on the Lord's Day. God has expressly enjoined them in his holy Word not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

1. Since the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the principles of public worship must be derived from the Bible, and from no other source.

2. A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God's children with each other but before all else a meeting of the triune God with his chosen people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the divine omnipresence but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

3. The end of public worship is the glory of God. His people should engage in all its several parts with an eye single to his glory. Public worship has as its aim the building of Christ's church by the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved—all to the glory of God. Through public worship on the Lord's Day Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in their every activity, remembering, whether they eat or drink or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God.

4. Public worship is rightly said to be divine because God is its beginning and its end. It is of him and through him and unto him.

5. Public worship is Christian when the worshippers recognize that Christ is the Mediator by whom alone they can come

unto God, when they honor Christ as the Head of the church, who rules over public worship, and when their worship is an expression of their faith in Christ and of their love for him.

6. Public worship must be performed in spirit and in truth. Externalism and hypocrisy stand condemned. The forms of public worship have value only when they serve to express the inner reverence of the worshipper and his sincere devotion to the true and living God. And only those whose hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit are capable of such reverence and devotion.

7. The Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed no fixed forms for public worship but, in the interest of life and power in worship, has given his church a large measure of liberty in this matter. It may not be forgotten, however, that there is true liberty only where the rules of God's Word are observed and the Spirit of the Lord is, that all things must be done decently and in order, and that God's people should serve him with reverence and in the beauty of holiness. From its beginning to its end a service of public worship should be characterized by that simplicity which is an evidence of sincerity and by that beauty and dignity which are a manifestation of holiness.

8. Public worship differs from private worship in that in public worship God is served by his saints unitedly as his covenant people, the body of Christ. For this reason the covenant children should be present so far as possible as well as adults. For the same reason no favoritism may be shown to any who attend. Nor may any member of the church presume to exalt himself above others as though he were more spiritual, but each shall esteem others better than himself.

9. It behooves God's people not only to come into his presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of his perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also to enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise for the great salvation which he has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER III

### THE USUAL PARTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

1. As a service of public worship is in its essence a meeting of God and his people, the parts of the service are of two kinds: those which are performed on behalf of God, and those which are performed by the congregation. In the former the worshippers are receptive, in the latter they are active. It is reasonable that these two elements be made to alternate as far as possible.

2. The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is performed by the minister as God's servant. Through it God speaks most directly to the congregation, even more directly than through the interpretation of Holy Writ in the sermon. For this reason the minister does well to refrain from interspersing the reading of God's Word with human comments, and the congregation should attend to the reading with deepest reverence. The reading of the Scriptures by the minister is to be distinguished from the responsive reading of certain portions of Scripture by the minister and the congregation. In the former God addresses his people; in the latter God's people give expression in the words of Scripture to their contrition, adoration, gratitude and other holy sentiments. The psalms of Scripture are especially appropriate for responsive reading.

3. In the sermon God addresses the congregation by the mouth of his servant. It is a matter of supreme importance that the minister preach only the Word of God, not the wisdom of man, that he declare the whole counsel of God, and that he handle aright the Word of truth. To these ends the sermon

must be prepared with the utmost care. Let the session give diligence that no person enter the pulpit concerning whose doctrinal soundness or knowledge of Scripture there is reasonable doubt. A text may not be used merely to introduce a sermon but must be painstakingly expounded. In the sermon the minister should explain the Word of God for the instruction of his hearers and then apply it for their exhortation. Care should be taken in preaching that Christian duty be not divorced from Christian truth. That minister fails to perform his task as a God-appointed watchman on Zion's walls who neglects to warn the congregation of prevalent soul-destroying teachings by enemies of the gospel. The minister should seek to perfect the saints by building them up in the most holy faith and in Christ's stead should beseech the unconverted that they be reconciled to God. Nothing is more necessary than that the gospel of salvation by grace be proclaimed without any adulteration or compromise, in order that the unsaved may rely for salvation on the grace of God only, to the exclusion of their own works or character, and that the saints may ascribe glory for their salvation to God alone.

4. It is proper that the minister at the beginning of the service extend a welcome in God's name to the congregation by the use of the apostolic salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." At the conclusion of the service the minister may pronounce in God's name either the high-priestly benediction, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," or the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." If, however, the minister deem another scriptural benediction more

fitting for a particular occasion, he may use it. The salutation and benediction, as pronounced in God's name, are properly used only by an ordained minister and in a gathering of Christ's church.

5. It is altogether fitting that, before the service, each person in the congregation engage in silent prayer. In public prayer the minister is the voice of the congregation. He should pray in such a way that the whole assembly of God's people may pray with him, and the members of the congregation not only are bound to listen as he prays but should themselves pray in their hearts. To these ends it is desirable that the minister prepare himself for public prayers by previous meditation. Early in the service he shall offer a brief invocation, humbly imploring for the congregation and himself the guidance of the Holy Spirit in worship. At some point before the sermon there shall be a comprehensive prayer comprising adoration of God's perfections, thanksgiving for his mercies, confession of sins, supplication for the pardon of sins through the blood of the atonement and for renewal by the Holy Spirit, intercession for the poor, the sick, the dying, the mourning, the persecuted, the erring, the rising generation, the aged, the churches of the denomination, Christian missions at home and abroad, Christian education and other Christian activities, the church universal, the civil rulers, the community, human society in general, or whatever causes may be particularly worthy. The prayer after the sermon ought usually to have a relation to the subject that has been treated in the discourse. Public prayer must be offered with deep humility and holy reverence and be free from vain repetition or display of words.

6. As it is the aim of public worship to glorify God, prayer and praise should predominate in congregational singing. Let

every member of the church take part in this act of worship. It should be performed not merely with the lips but with the spirit and the understanding. Since the metrical versions of the Psalms are based upon the Word of God, they ought to be used frequently in public worship. Great care must be taken that all the materials of song are in perfect accord with the teaching of Holy Scripture. Let the tunes as well as the words be dignified and elevated. The stately rhythm of the choral is especially appropriate for public worship. No person shall take a special part in the musical service unless he is a professing Christian and adorns his profession with a godly walk.

7. The bringing of offerings into God's house is a solemn act of thanksgiving to almighty God. In order that the receiving of the offering may stand out as a specific act of worship it is well that the minister either precede or immediately follow it with a brief prayer, invoking the blessing of God upon the offering and devoting it to his service. It is the duty of the minister to cultivate the grace of liberal giving in the members of the church by reminding them of the scriptural admonition that every one should give as the Lord has prospered him, of the assurance of Scripture that God loves a cheerful giver, and of the blessed example of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was rich, became poor in order that poor sinners through his poverty might become rich. The session shall take care that the offerings of the congregation are used only for the maintenance of public worship, the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, and other Christian objects. If a member of the church designated his gift to a particular cause, the session shall respect his wish unless it is convinced that the specified cause is unworthy, in which case the gift shall be returned to the donor.

8. Nothing in the preceding sections shall be understood so as to prohibit ruling elders from leading in public prayer, reading the Scriptures, leading responsive readings, or, on occasion, exhorting the congregation as part of public worship.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

#### A. General Provisions

1. In order that the sacraments, as occasional elements of the public worship of God, may be celebrated with discernment and understanding, it is necessary that adequate preparation be made prior to their administration. It is imperative that believers meditate beforehand upon the teaching of the Word of God relative to their meaning in order that they may participate in a worthy manner. Such preparation may well include the study of that summary of this teaching which is found in the Confession of Faith. To avoid ignorance and superstition suitable preparatory sermons should be preached from time to time, and the celebration of the sacraments should be accompanied by the preaching of the Word. Moreover, in connection with the administration of the sacraments, a summary of the teaching of the Word of God as to their meaning shall be set forth.

2. The baptism of infants is not to be unnecessarily delayed. Notice of intention to present a child for baptism must be given to the session by a parent who is a believer. The baptism of adults must await their public profession of faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated frequently, but the frequency may be determined by each session as it may judge most conducive to edification.

3. Since the sacraments are ordinances of the visible church, they are not to be administered except under the oversight of

the government of the church. Moreover, in ordinary circumstances they are properly administered only in a gathering of the congregation for the public worship of God, baptism signifying solemn admission into the visible church, and the Lord's Supper constituting the communion of believers with Christ and with each other as members of his mystical body. Nevertheless, if a session judge that very unusual circumstances obtain in a particular instance, the sacraments may be administered elsewhere; but, in any event, the church must be represented in the service.

4. Although the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend upon the piety or intention of the minister, they are not to be administered by any private person but only by a minister of Christ, called to be a steward of the mysteries of God.

5. In the administration of the sacraments, the minister shall follow the directions prescribed in the subsequent divisions of this chapter, but he is not required to use the exact language of the indented forms, which are suggested as appropriate. He may employ these or similar forms, using his own liberty and godly wisdom as the edification of the people shall require.

### **B. Holy Baptism**

1. Before the administration of the sacrament of baptism, the minister shall give instruction as to the institution and nature of the sacrament:

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sign and seal of the inclusion of the person who is baptized in the covenant of grace. Teaching that we and our children are conceived and born in sin, it witnesses

and seals unto us the remission of sins and the bestowal of all the gifts of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals cleansing from sin by the blood and the Spirit of Christ, together with our death unto sin and our resurrection unto newness of life by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Since these gifts of salvation are the gracious provision of the triune God, who is pleased to claim us as his very own, we are baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And since baptized persons are called upon to assume the obligations of the covenant, baptism summons us to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

2. When an infant is to be baptized, the minister shall proceed to give instruction as to the ground of infant baptism:

Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptized. For the promise of the covenant is made to believers and to their seed, as God declared unto Abraham: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." In the new dispensation no less than in the old, the seed of the faithful, born within the church, have, by virtue of their birth, interest in the covenant and right to the seal of it and to the outward privileges of the church. For the covenant of grace is the same in substance under both dispensations, and the grace of God for the consolation of believers is even more fully manifested in the new dispensation. Moreover, our Saviour admitted little children into his

presence, embracing and blessing them, and saying, “Of such is the kingdom of God.” So the children of the covenant are by baptism distinguished from the world and solemnly received into the visible church.

3. When an adult is to be baptized, the minister shall follow the opening statement on the institution and nature of the sacrament of baptism with instruction as to the distinctive basis of the baptism of adults:

Although the children of believers are to be baptized as members of the covenant, the baptism of adults must await their own profession of faith in Christ. Having come to years of discretion, they become the heirs of salvation and members of the visible church only by way of personal belief in and acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord. So our Lord Jesus Christ commanded his church to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

4. Before the baptism of an infant, the minister shall require that the parents acknowledge the duty of believers to present their children for holy baptism and that they assume publicly their responsibility for the Christian nurture of their children:

Do you acknowledge that, although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore are subject to condemnation, they are holy in Christ, and as members of his church ought to be baptized?

Do you promise to instruct your child in the principles of our holy religion as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as summarized in the Confes-

sion of Faith and Catechisms of this Church; and do you promise to pray with and for your child, to set an example of piety and godliness before him, and to endeavor by all the means of God's appointment to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

5. Prior to the baptism of an adult, the person to be baptized, having previously made profession of faith before the session, shall be required to confess his faith publicly before the congregation, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter V of this Directory.

6. After prayer for the presence and blessing of the triune God that the grace signified and sealed by holy baptism may be abundantly realized, the minister, calling the person by name, shall say:

I baptize thee into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

As he pronounces these words, he is to baptize with water, without adding any other ceremony, and the whole service of baptism shall be concluded with prayer.

### **C. The Lord's Supper**

1. Before the administration of the Lord's Supper, the minister shall read the words of the institution of the sacrament from one of the evangelists or from I Corinthians 11. Thereupon he shall give instruction as to its institution and nature:

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Until his coming again it is to be observed

for a perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death. The physical elements, representing the broken body and the shed blood of the Saviour, are received by true believers as signs and seals of all the benefits of his sacrifice upon the cross. They signify and seal remission of sins and nourishment and growth in Christ, and are a bond and pledge of communion of believers with him and with each other as members of his mystical body. As signs and seals of the covenant of grace they not only declare that God is faithful and true to fulfill the promises of the covenant but they also summon us to all the duties of the children of God, and call us to renewed consecration in gratitude for his salvation.

2. The minister shall then declare who may come to the Lord's table and who are excluded, according to the Word of God:

It is my solemn duty to warn the uninstructed, the profane, the scandalous, and those who secretly and impenitently live in any sin, not to approach the holy table lest they partake unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, and so eat and drink condemnation to themselves. Nevertheless, this warning is not designed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if the supper were for those who might be free from sin. On the contrary, we who are invited to the supper, coming as guilty and polluted sinners and without hope of eternal life apart from the grace of God in Christ, confess our dependence for pardon and cleansing upon the perfect sacrifice of Christ, base our hope of eternal life upon his perfect obedience and righteousness, and humbly resolve to deny ourselves, crucify our old natures, and follow Christ as

becomes those who bear his name. Let us therefore, in accordance with the admonition of the apostle Paul, examine our minds and hearts to determine whether such discernment is ours, to the end that we may partake to the glory of God and to our growth in the grace of Christ.

3. After prayer and thanksgiving the minister shall take the bread and, having broken it, give it to the people saying:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, having taken bread and blessed and broken it, gave it to his disciples—as I, ministering in his name, give this bread unto you—saying: “Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.”

Having given the bread, the minister shall take the cup and give it to the people saying:

Our Savior also took the cup and having given thanks—as has been done in his name—he gave it to his disciples, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it.”

After a prayer of thanksgiving, an offering may be taken for the relief of the poor or for some other sacred purpose.

A psalm or hymn should then be sung, and the congregation dismissed with the following or some other benediction:

“Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in you that

which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;  
to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

## CHAPTER V

### PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST

1. In order to aid those who contemplate making public profession of faith in Christ to understand the implication of this significant act and to perform it intelligently, the pastor shall conduct classes in Christian doctrine both for the covenant youth and for any others who may manifest an interest in the way of salvation.

2. Before permitting any one to make profession of his faith in the presence of the congregation, the session shall examine him in order to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.

3. When the session is satisfied that any one is qualified to make public profession of faith in Christ, his name shall be publicly announced to the church at least one week before the day chosen for this solemn event, in order that the members of the church may have opportunity to acquaint the session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a sincere profession. The session shall weigh such evidence and determine its validity.

4. No one shall be allowed to take part in the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper who has not first made public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

5. On the occasion of public profession of faith in Christ, the minister shall address the candidate in these or like words, using the form which the circumstances require:

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace which was given you, in that, having come to years of discretion, you have accepted God's covenant promise which was signified and sealed unto you in your infancy by holy baptism.

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank our God for the grace which was given you, in that, although you have not been privileged to receive the sacrament of baptism in your infancy, nevertheless, through faith you have become a partaker of the covenant of grace.

Thereupon the minister shall ask these, or equivalent, questions:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

4. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of this church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life, to heed its discipline?

When any one has publicly professed his faith by answering these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall address him in the following or like words:

Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the sacrament of the holy supper. I charge you that by the faithful use of the means of grace—the Word of God, the sacraments and prayer—and in humble reliance upon the grace of God, you continue steadfastly in the confession which you have made. Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, he will confess you before his Father who is in heaven. May the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This part of the service shall be concluded with an appropriate prayer.

## CHAPTER VI

### ORDINATIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

#### A. Ministers

1. The ordination or installation of a minister shall be performed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XXIII of the Form of Government.

2. When a minister is to be ordained or installed, the moderator of the presbytery or another member appointed to preside in his stead shall state, in the following or similar language, the warrant and nature of the office of minister:

The Word of God clearly teaches that the office of minister was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul declares that our Lord “gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.”

The duties of the minister of Christ may briefly be set forth under the following heads: the faithful exposition of the Word of God and its application to the needs of the hearers, in order that the unconverted may be reconciled to God and that the saints may be built up in their most holy faith; the offering of prayer to the Lord on behalf of the congregation; the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and the exercise, in conjunction with the ruling elders, of the government and discipline of the church.

The office of the minister is the first in the church for dignity and usefulness. The person who fills this office is designated in Scripture by different names expressive of his various du-

ties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house of God, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. As he is commanded to warn the house of Israel against the enemies of God and his Word, he is termed watchman. And, as he dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.

### **B. Ruling Elders**

1. The ordination or installation of ruling elders shall be performed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XXV of the Form of Government.

2. When ruling elders are to be ordained or installed, the minister shall state, in the following or similar language, the warrant and nature of the office:

The office of ruling elder is based upon the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided for his church officers who should rule in his name. Paul and Barnabas “appointed ... elders in every church”; and Paul commanded that those who “rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.” In this passage the Scriptures distinguish between elders who labor particularly in the Word and in doctrine—usually called ministers or pastors—and elders who join with the minister in the government and discipline of the church—generally called ruling elders.

It is the duty and privilege of ruling elders, in the name and

by the authority of our ascended king, to rule over particular churches, and, as servants of our great shepherd, to care for his flock. Holy Scripture enjoins them: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." As a consequence, ruling elders must be zealous in maintaining the purity of the ministration of the Word and sacraments. They must conscientiously exercise discipline and uphold the good order and peace of the church. With love and humility they should promote faithfulness on the part of both elders and deacons in the discharge of their duties. Moreover, they should have particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, in order that the church may be edified, and may manifest itself as the pillar and ground of the truth.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, ruling elders must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

### **C. Deacons**

1. The ordination or installation of deacons shall be performed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter XXV of the Form of Government.

2. When deacons are to be ordained or installed, the minister shall state, in the following or similar language, the warrant and nature of the office:

The office of deacon is based upon the solicitude and love of

Christ for his own people. So tender is our Lord's interest in their temporal needs that he considers what is done unto one of the least of his brethren as done unto him. For he will say to those who have ministered to his little ones: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

In the beginning the apostles themselves ministered to the poor, but subsequently, in order that they might be able to devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the Word, they committed that responsibility to others, having directed the people to choose men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Since the days of the apostles the church has recognized the care of the poor as a distinct ministry of the church committed to deacons.

The duties of deacons consist of encouraging members of the church to provide for those who are in want, seeking to prevent poverty, making discreet and cheerful distribution to the needy, praying with the distressed and reminding them of the consolations of Holy Scripture.

If they are to fill worthily so sacred an office, deacons must adorn sound doctrine by holy living, setting an example of godliness in all their relations with men. Let them walk with exemplary piety and diligently discharge the obligations of their office; and "when the chief shepherd shall be manifested," they "shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

