

ARMENIAN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ORDAINS DEACONS AND PRIESTS

Jerusalem (PIO) – In the millennial tradition of the Armenian Church, His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, performed the ordination of two deacons and four priests, from Friday to Sunday, 4 to 6 August 2000. Two seminarians, Hovnan Baghdasarian and Virab Bedrosian were granted the rank of Semi-Deacon in the chapel of St. Etchmiadzin on Friday afternoon, following the Vesper services. On Saturday morning, during the Divine Liturgy, they were ordained to the Diaconate.

The sacrament of ordination to the priesthood took place in the St. James Cathedral, on Sunday, 6 August 2000, the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the presence of numerous worshippers and pilgrims. The ordination, consisting of three separate rituals over two days, began during the Vesper services on 5 August, with the “call to the priesthood.” Led by the Grand Sacristan, Bishop Nourhan Manougian, Deacons Haig Kazazian, Arman Minasian, Misak Hovhannisian, and Armen Joundourian, flanked by their sponsoring priests, solemnly advanced on their knees from the entrance of the Cathedral toward the chancel, where His Beatitude the Patriarch was seated. The ordinants approached the Patriarch, kissed his right hand, and gave witness to their unswerving faith and priestly merit through responses to ritual questions. They denounced all the heresies of the Christian Church and pledged to follow in the footsteps of the Orthodox Church Fathers. Then in unison they recited the credo of faith of the Armenian Church.

On Sunday, the ordination ceremony continued as part of the Divine Liturgy, celebrated by Bishop Sevan Gharibian. His Beatitude, seated before the altar, summoned the four acolytes with “the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Once again, they made their way slowly on their knees and across the bema where they turned to the congregation, their raised palms facing outward in renunciation of their worldly life and their acceptance of a new life as priests. The Patriarch laid his hands on the supplicants’ heads, climaxing the ritual, in a gesture reminiscent of the Apostolic tradition of blessing. He then placed the deacon’s stoles symbolizing the yoke of Christ around their necks as a sign of their total dedication and voluntary commitment to the service of their Church and people.

Following readings from the Gospels and the recitation of the Creed, the ordination proceeded with the bringing of the Holy Chrism (“Muron”) to the High Altar. The Patriarch anointed the forehead, right and left palms of the four ordinants and revealed their new names, chosen by him and kept a closely guarded secret: Father Norayr (Dn. Haig), Father Isahag (Dn. Arman), Father Ghevont (Dn. Misak), and Father Khat (Dn. Armen). Then they were accorded the right to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, and, fully vested, they each gave their first blessing to the congregation.

In his sermon, the Patriarch exhorted the newly ordained priests to continue to learn, to lead, and to share the joy of their new life with others. The deacon chanted the bidding of the “Kiss of Peace,” which His Beatitude received by kissing their foreheads and right hands. The bishops and priests followed. After the Liturgy, the congregation and family members, who were privileged to witness this spiritually uplifting event, also greeted them.

On Sunday afternoon, during the Vesper services, the newly ordained priests received their hoods (“veggar”), as a symbol of their vows of celibacy. Father Norayr, Father Isahag, Father Ghevont, and Father Khat are spending their forty days of seclusion and reflection, under the mentorship of Father Pakrad Bourjekian, in the Armenian Convent in Bethlehem. They will celebrate their first Divine Liturgy (“Antranig Badarak”) in the St. James Cathedral on September 12, 13, 14, and 15, respectively.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem rejoices for the revitalization of the Brotherhood of St. James by four young, energetic, and devoted servants of the Armenian Church.

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