



*St Catherine's Seminary is the name of the internal study and training program of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church*

## The Types of Minister

There's lots of names for the vicar/minister/pastor etc. at the church. What do they all mean? What's the difference? And how did they come about?

### Episcopal Churches

There are two sorts as far as Holy Orders are concerned: Most are simplified in orders (Anglican, Roman Catholic etc), others have full orders (Orthodox, Liberal Catholic, Old Catholic). They are conferred at ordination by Apostolic Succession.

Simplified Orders:

#### Deacon

The first of the Holy Orders, mostly but not always an intermediate step to priesthood. Perpetual Deacons exist in some churches.

Title: Reverend

#### Priest

The second and most numerically common order. Most services are conducted by priests.

Title: Reverend or Father. Revd. Mother, or Amma.

#### Bishop

The third order. Bishops are elected from the ranks of priests, and are priests themselves. Bishops give episcopal oversight to priests and deacons.

Title: Rt Rev, in some cases Monsignor

Other titles (which are not in themselves categories of Holy Order):

#### Archbishop

A senior bishop in charge of other bishops, but episcopally no 'higher' - still a bishop

Title: Most Rev. or Rt Rev. or Archbishop Name.

#### Canon

A member of a cathedral chapter or collegiate church (priest)

Title: Canon or Rev. Canon

**Canon (Rural Dean)**

A priest acting as superintendent overseeing other congregations, but only in administrative ways. (i.e. not episcopal oversight). Church of England mainly.

Title: Reverend

**Cardinal**

Leading dignitary in the Roman Catholic Church, approximating Archbishop

Title: Monsigneur

**Chaplain**

Clergy attached to a private chapel, institution, ship, regiment, hospital etc.

Title: Reverend, Father or Chaplain

**Curate**

A Priest (or deacon) 'looking after' a church or congregation, nowadays usually temporarily. Title: Reverend

**Dean**

The head priest of a cathedral chapter or collegiate church

Title: Very Reverend

**Metropolitan**

A senior bishop in charge of other bishops (some denominations call them Archbishop)

Title: Most Rev.

**Padre**

Means 'Father'. A priest. Military Padre = priest serving in the military

Title: Father or Rev.

**Precentor**

A minor canon in charge of choir and music in a cathedral

**Prebender**

Historic term for a priest who receives a stipend of a canon. A benefice (or one who is an honorary canon).

Title: Rev. Preb.

**Prelate**

Historic term for senior cleric (abbot, bishop, prior etc)

**Primus**

Presiding Bishop, or other leader in some denominations

Title: Most Rev.

**Provost**

Head of a cathedral chapter or collegiate church (some denominations call them Dean)

Title: Very Reverend

**Rector**

Priest who is the incumbent of a parish with legal benefits (a benefice).

Title: Reverend

**Sidesmen**

These are laity and not therefore in Holy Orders, rather like Acolytes.

No title

**Superior**

Spiritual leader of a religious community. Often Mother Superior

Title: Reverend Mother

**Vicar**

Priest in charge of the parish as a whole, as a representative of the Bishop

Title: Reverend

Other functions like Reader, Church Warden, Bell-ringer, Doorkeeper, Youth Leader etc. in the simplified orders are sidesmen and so not Holy Orders.

**Episcopal Churches using Full Orders:**

There are Minor Orders and Major Orders.

***Minor Orders:***

**Cleric**

First (lowest) order. Clerics are intended to be co-workers with Christ      No title

**Doorkeeper**

Second order. Intended to protect the church from spiritual intruders, who would disrupt the congregation      No title

**Reader**

Third order. Historically not all could read, it was the readers job to read scripture to them - of course! However, the Gospel is read in worship by the deacon.      No title

**Exorcist**

Their duty is to cast out devils, give priority to communicants and pour out Holy Water      No title

### **Acolyte**

Acolytes carried the candles & presented Eucharistic elements to the priest at the altar  
No title

The churches which use full orders no longer confine these duties to those ordained to the varying degrees of minor orders. They are however used symbolically and invested with moral significance as part of the progression to priesthood through the various orders.

### ***Major Orders:***

#### **Sub-Deacon**

A grade of probation for the greater orders of deacon and priest.  
Reverend

#### **Deacon**

Ministers at the altar (but not offer the Eucharistic sacrifice), reads the gospel, preaches, and baptize in the absence of a priest.  
Reverend

#### **Priest**

Priests are to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, to bless, to preside, to anoint, to preach and baptize. They 'lead' their congregations.  
Reverend

#### **Bishop**

Bishops are priests consecrated to the Bishopric (rather than ordained to it). Lead and give oversight to priests, and their congregations.  
Rt Reverend

## **Non-Episcopal Churches**

There are no Holy Orders in these churches. Ministers are called under various terms not all of which apply in each of the various denominations. Each respects and understands the other. Each is empowered by the Holy Spirit and the calling of the congregation rather than through Apostolic Succession.

#### **Deacon**

An assistant minister (not an order like episcopal churches) May or may not be ordained. Usually considered less senior than a minister.  
No title or Brother or Rev.

#### **Deaconess**

Female deacon, usually serving by pastoral care, home visits etc.  
Sister

**Elder**

Usually not ordained. A member of a circle of people who act as church leaders (church council)

Brother/Sister or no title

**Laity**

After Christ the most important people there. The others are to serve Jesus and to serve you, the congregation!

**Minister**

A generic term used for most non-episcopal clergy. The majority of churches call their servants minister.

Rev

**Pastor**

Minister whose special emphasis is on spiritual guidance and pastoral care

Pastor or Revd. Pastor

**Preacher**

A generic term for the person who delivers a sermon, homily or exposition. Not necessarily ordained (i.e. Lay-preacher)

No title

**Presbyter**

Technical term for the single layer model of clergy (i.e. non-episcopal)

Rev.

**President**

Elected leader of a synod or conference etc. For example Methodist

Deliberately Mr. (or Madam) irrespective of other titles.

**Moderator**

Elected leader of a synod or conference etc. For example Church of Scotland.

Deliberately Mr. (or Madam) irrespective of other titles.

**Usher**

Not ordained, a greeter and someone that shows you to your seat in some evangelical churches.

Some Apostolic churches have Reader, Teacher, Pastor, Prophet, Overseer, Apostle.

The Salvation Army have military style titles Colonel, Captain, Soldier etc.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have Elder as a ministerial position.

Note: Growing churches tend to involve every member of the church. The days when the clergy took the services and the congregation just watched are over. Many churches are very much like a family with everyone playing their part and sharing the burdens, joys and responsibilities.

## **Religious Communities - Holy Orders**

### **Abbot**

The leader of a community of monks, (abbot from the Greek word Abbas which means 'father')

Father

### **Abbess (historic)**

The female leader of a community of nuns. Nowadays usually called Mother Superior instead.

Mother

### **Friar**

One who is a member of one of the four remaining mendicant orders. Always male.

Brother

### **Monk**

Male member of a religious community living under vows, (e.g. vow of poverty, celibacy, obedience)

Brother

### **Mother Superior**

The female leader of a religious community

Mother or Rev. Mother

### **Nun**

Female member of a religious community living under vows (e.g. vow of poverty, celibacy, obedience)

Sister

### **Priestess**

This term does not exist in Christianity. Female minister of a non-Christian religion. Included here by way of explanation.

### **Prior**

The superior of a religious house or community or a religious leader next under an Abbot in an Abbey community

Father or Brother

### **Prioress (historic)**

The female superior of a religious community. Nowadays usually called Mother Superior instead.

There are groups and communities who have varying orders of their own, for example:

Augustinian Mendicant

Carmelite Mendicant

Cistercian

Dominican Mendicant

Franciscan Mendicant

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