

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, December 4, 2016*

YEAR A - SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Hello everyone, and welcome to our celebration of the second Sunday in our Advent Season. We would also make mention that today is the 112th anniversary of the consecration of Julien Houssay, Abbé Julio, into the episcopate by Palolo Miraglia Gulatti, a bishop of the Eglise Catholique Independente d'Italie, that is the Independent Catholic Church of Italy. This occurred at an Old Catholic parish church, assisted by the Curé of this parish, Mgr. Paul Kaminski, and Mgr. Aloysius Blum. Miraglia performed this consecration under the direct order and approval of bishop René Vilatte. Bishops Vilatte, Gulatti, and Houssay would all be quite instrumental in passing the apostolic succession to many in the Independent Sacramental Movement, including the Gnostic Church, and so on down to us in our day.

Perhaps we should take this occasion to say a few words on the apostolic succession, what it is, and why it is important to us. Simply put, the apostolic succession is the succession of bishops from one of the twelve apostles. This continuous succession, perpetuated person to person through a sacramental laying on of hands, is held to transmit, really and tangibly, certain powers of sacramental authority that were first granted by Jesus Christ himself to his twelve apostles. It is these powers, conferred by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of mortals, that constitutes the authority of the sacramental churches, such as the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, and numerous bodies that have descended from these. There has often been a question as to the "validity" of the Holy Orders transmitted outside the orthodoxy. On this topic, let us turn to the words of our late brother in the Gnosis, bishop Robert Ambelain, who states that:

"To the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, to be licit and to be valid are quite different things...to be valid is to hold the Succession of the Apostles; it is to be able to prove that one dates it back, without missing a name, to one of the twelve Apostles. And this is an accountancy painstakingly kept by all the Churches...to be illicit is, all while being valid, to belong to a Church called "separated" or not united with Rome. To be licit is to belong to the Roman Catholic Church, or to an Eastern Church recognizing its authority, its preeminence, and its dogmas."

We learn from bishop Ambelain, therefore, that while "licitness" refers only to one's relation with the Roman Church, validity is something quite independent, relying upon the regularity with which the sacrament is transmitted rather than the outer ecclesiastical body through which it passes. Bishop Ambelain identifies two conditions "necessary and exxential to the validity of the episcopal consecration":

"1) The consecration must attach the conscreated to the apostolic lineage. The consecrator must therefore be, and validly, a Bishop himself...In short, he must possess the apostolic filiation in order to be able to trnasmit it.

"2) The Ritual, the material for into which the sacramental grace inserts itself, must be traditional; that is to say that it must convey the will to transmit, on the one part, and the will to receive, on the other part, what constitutes the Episcopate according to Christ."

So, what this comes down to are basically the same conditions by which any and every sacrament is effected, namely, matter, form and intent. The matter here is the episcopal quality of the consecrator himself; that is, having validly received the apostolic succession. The form consists of certain ritual elements common to all consecrations. Finally, the intent is the will to transmit and the will to receive. This concept is especially important to the small, independent churches, because it reminds us that, from a sacramental point of view, there is no difference between great and small, for we are allempowered by one Holy Spirit.