

JULY 25

ON July 25, Bishop-elect John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung will be ordained bishop and will be installed as Bishop of Hong Kong. Thus two acts, ordination and installation, will be combined in a single ceremony.

The two acts are not always combined. Many will remember that Bishop Francis Hsu and Bishop Peter Lei were first ordained bishops, that they might become Auxiliaries to the Bishop of Hong Kong. Then, as each in turn, years later, became Bishop of Hong Kong, they were installed in that new post.

The two acts are of very different natures. Installation is the solemn proclamation that, through nomination by the Pope, a new bishop has received the right and the duty of governing and guiding the local Church. Its importance is primarily symbolic. It does not confer any new powers or impose new responsibilities. Its importance lies in the solemn reminder that it gives both to the bishop himself and to the members of the diocese that the bishop has the duties and the rights of the leader and head of the People of God in the portion of the Church that has been entrusted to him.

Ordination also includes symbolism; but it gives what it symbolizes; for Ordination is a Sacrament. At the heart of the ceremony of Episcopal Ordination, the Ordaining Bishop lays his hands upon the head of the candidate for ordination. Then, speaking in the name of Christ our Lord, and with His authority, he says 'Now pour out upon this chosen one that power which flows from you, the perfect Spirit whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit whom he gave to the apostles, who established the Church in every place as the sanctuary where your name would always be praised and glorified.' When that imposition of hands and the saying of these words have been completed, he who had been a candidate is a candidate no longer. He is a bishop, competent to ordain deacons and priests and bishops, burdened with collegial episcopal responsibility for the People of God throughout the world, and forming part, in company with his fellow bishops, of the magisterium, the teaching authority given by Christ to the Church.

Installation has something in common with the inauguration of a president or the proclamation of a new king's accession to the throne, though the duties and rights that it signifies are rights and duties not in the body politic but in the mystical Body of Christ. Perhaps the only helpful human parallel to Ordination is to be found in the mystery of human conception, when new life is given to the world.

If bishops were merely installed we might have some justification for regarding them merely as officials designated to guide and direct us, men with whom we need have no more than the union needed for successful cooperation. Ordination makes it clear to us that union with our bishop is something belonging to the nature of Christ Mystical Body and to the life of the People of God. The prayer that we offer for the Bishop in the Eucharistic Prayer of every Mass is not merely a ritual ornament; it is a daily expression of the union that makes us one in Christ. We worship the Father and carry on our Christian mission, not as isolated units, but as the People of God, united under our Bishop and our Pope, that, being one in the Holy Spirit, we may offer to the Eternal Father all honour and glory, through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, now and for ever.