



CANDIDATE FOR MINOR ORDERS

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Overview of Minor Orders

The Apostolic Guardian Church of Grace and Blessing is organized around an Initiatic degree structure which encourages (but does not require) members to participate in the Minor Orders as an aid to their spiritual growth.

Minor Orders are not of Apostolic origin and are not universally recognized. What does this mean? It means the Minor Orders have developed and evolved over time and due to various traditions and are not directly traceable to the teachings of the Master Jesus or his Apostles. Some Churches use them, some don't. Some Churches use one version, some another.

The Minor Orders have many names. In the Apostolic Guardian Church of Grace and Blessing, the Minor Orders are offered in four degrees (often called Offices) which may be thought of as levels of spiritual apprenticeship. For convenience, these 4 degrees (or Offices) are called by their ancient and symbolic names of:

1. Office of Doorkeeper
2. Office of Reader
3. Office of Exorcist, and
4. Office of Acolyte.

Although the focus of work of the Minor Orders is primarily for personal spiritual growth, those who have received *all four* of the Minor Orders are also considered to be working clergy of the Apostolic Guardian Church (not of any other Church) and may assist (if they are invited and if they so desire) in the celebration of Mass (at the discretion of the officiating Priest or Bishop), but they have no obligation to pursue an active ministry, nor are they authorized to do so.

Each Candidate for Minor Orders progresses through a series of mentored studies and practices. Those who satisfactorily complete the requirements for all four Minor Orders may, if they so desire, apply to receive training in the Major Orders of Deacon, Priest, and Bishop. However, *completion of Minor Orders does not automatically guarantee acceptance into the Major Orders.*

The Symbolic Role of Doorkeeper

Historically, it was the duty of the Doorkeeper to ring the church bells and open the doors of the church at appointed times. Today these duties are seen as mostly symbolic. The primary focus of the Doorkeeper in the Apostolic Guardian Church is to:

- Meditate and reflect on his/her relationship with God (see *Reflections on God paper*).
- Meditate and reflect on his/her relationship with Christ (see *Reflections on Christ paper*).
- Meditate and reflect on his/her relationship with the Holy Mother (see *Reflections on the Divine Feminine paper*).
- Open the doors of the Heart in service to others.
- Meditate and contemplate on the 'door' as a symbol at least 5-6 times.
- Invite others to worship by the force of his/her good example. Just as the Doorkeeper of days past rang the bell to summon those to worship, so does the Doorkeeper of today invite by example.
- Begin an ongoing process of emotional purification
- Begin an ongoing process of Evening Daily Review

Doorkeeper Assignments

- 1. Write a detailed one-to-two page summary of your thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding the assigned Reflections Papers.**
- 2. Write a detailed one-page summary of your meditation, contemplation, and reflections on the 'door' as a symbol. Include dates and times of meditation.**
- 3. Complete all work described in the preceding bulleted outline.**
- 4. Complete the Doorkeeper Rite of Dedication.**

Timely, thorough, and satisfactory completion of all assignments is necessary for further advancement.

The Emotional Body or Field

The work of the Doorkeeper is focused on the emotional body. This is an important step in a person's spiritual maturation. The realization we are not just our bodies—that we are more than our physical bodies—is the first step. The second step is to realize we are not just our feelings either. In the heat of the moment, it's easy to become blinded by our emotional state and to temporarily forget who we really are.

As a Doorkeeper, one major task is to regularly remind ourselves we are a spiritual being and recall we are more than just our body and the emotions we feel, that we are in fact “Sons and Daughter of the Most High.” For this we use several practices of remembrance (see separate paper on Remembrance).

Doorkeepers are also enjoined to remember that their spiritual path is unique. Yes, others may follow a similar path, but the path followed by each individual is unique to them. Spiritual paths may cross, as indeed they do as we grow spiritually, and what seemed correct yesterday may not be so today. This is part of the learning process we all go through as we spiritually ripen and mature.

The office of Doorkeeper is also the office of the student. It is the responsibility of the Doorkeeper to continue studying various spiritual paths and continually determine the right and proper path for him or her as an individual. The Keeper sees his or her alb as a symbol for both the budding mastery of his or her emotions and the rebirth or refining of his or her body into the glorified spiritual body.

An alb is a long white robe with or without a hood. Doorkeepers are not required to purchase an alb, though it is preferable. They may use any robe, including a bathrobe, or other covering to signify separation from the physical world and entry into spiritual space. This same garment or covering may be used for other spiritual activities such as healing.

While serving as a Doorkeeper, the student is expected to examine her or his emotional health and begin to address any weaknesses found. In this endeavor, there are many helpful methods that can be used, one is the Cultivation of Virtues (see separate paper on Virtues).

The Seven Deadly “Sins”

Another method is to meditate with each of the Seven Deadly Sins looking deeply into your own subconscious memory to ascertain any negative emotions which arise. Using this method, students are instructed to work

through each of these negative feelings one by one forgiving themselves and any people or institutions whom they feel may have wronged them.

If you decide to employ this technique, then your assignment would be to examine any feelings of anger, envy, lust or greed you may have toward any person, place or thing and any feelings of arrogance, inertia and craving you may have. Once you have identified the feeling, try to find the cause of your feelings. If at the root of your feelings is the conviction you have been wronged in any way, work diligently to forgive the person, place or thing whom or which you feel may have wronged you. Place these people, places and things in your prayers and ask for Divine guidance in forgiving them. If the root of your feelings is a feeling of inadequacy, inferiority or any kind of unworthiness, place these feelings in your prayers and ask for Divine guidance in forgiving yourself.

Any anger you feel towards another can cause harm to your health and happiness. Whatever you give you receive. Whatever you do to others at a physical, mental, emotional or spiritual level comes back to you on the same or another level. When you forgive, you feel forgiven. When you are angry towards another person, place or thing, that anger comes back on you. When you release the anger you feel toward another person and replace it with love, then the anger coming back on you is released and replaced with love. This is the Golden Rule, it is the Law of Rabbi Akiba first recorded in the Talmud several centuries ago, and it is the law behind the Laws of Moses and the Commandments of both the New and Old Testaments.

Any envy you have of any person, place or thing reduces your ability to function in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual planes. Envy changes the nature of the hormones in your body. Envy changes your brain wave patterns and autonomic system making it harder for you to think clearly and function effectively in everyday life. Envy reduces your immunity to disease. When you accept the fact that the Universe is unerringly just in all things, that what exists now is exactly what should exist at this time, you can accept that what others have is what they need for their own spiritual growth at this time; what you have is what you need for your spiritual growth at this time.

Lust is heralded as appropriate for men and inappropriate for women in our male-dominated society. What applies to the goose also applies to the gander. Lust of any kind causes problems for both sexes. Lust increases blood pressure and invites heart disease. Lust increases oxidation of our organs and decreases the effectiveness of anti-oxidants in our system. Lust increases the flow of adrenalin beyond normal limits

and this powerful hormone attacks our body making it more susceptible to disease and decreasing the effectiveness of our organs and immune system.

Greed is very destructive. Greed robs you of the present and takes your future away from you. It is when you give that you receive. When you take without permission, you do not receive anything but grief. You cannot keep what you take and what you try to keep for yourself. Eventually you will lose it all and with it you will lose your spiritual advancement. Become a giver and you will receive more than you can imagine. Become a keeper and you will lose more than you can possibly imagine. If you have feelings of greed about any of your possessions or any possessions of another, it is time to examine your greed. It may also be time to give up your greed and the possessions which you feel you must accumulate.

These are the four exterior "Deadly Sins" which we visit upon other people. Take time to examine these things while serving as a Door Keeper. Find the cause of these feelings and forgive yourself and others so you can overcome any feelings of anger, envy, lust and greed within you. Then take a look at the three interior "Deadly Sins" of arrogance, inertia and craving.

Arrogance is an outward expression of intellectual and physical superiority based on feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and unworthiness. When you feel there is something wrong with your body or mind, you are in error. You are a Child of the One Intelligence. You are a Child of the Great Mystery. You are a Child of the Grand Architect of the Universe, the Divine—God. You were created to be equal, adequate and worthy to accomplish your lifetime goals. You are neither superior nor inferior to any other living thing. You have been endowed with the gifts you need to accomplish your purpose. You are worthy.

Inertia is the modern name for the ancient concept of sloth which is no longer a widely used word in the English language. Inertia is laziness, the inability to ever accomplish anything except to sit around and vegetate. Inertia is procrastination taken to an extreme. Inertia is counter-productive. Each of us has a purpose to accomplish in our lives. Inertia is a denial of that purpose. It's an unwillingness to work and do the things we need to do to fulfill ourselves and our purpose.

Craving is a modern word for gluttony. Too often gluttony is attributed to eating or drinking too much food or beverages, but in fact it's excessiveness of any kind. Gluttony can be eating too much food, too

much sugar, too much of one or more foods, drinks or snacks. But it's also a craving for too much work, vacation, sex, excitement, money, things or anything else in our lives. This craving gets in the way of our normal lives. Craving expands from one thing to another until we're addicted to many things. These addictions sap our energy and our strength. They destroy our immune system. Cravings lead to inertia and arrogance and then to all of the exterior "Deadly Sins" of anger, envy, lust and greed.

These three interior "Deadly Sins" are rooted in feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, unworthiness, helplessness, hopelessness, and ineffectiveness. These feelings are in error as we already know. But we need to forgive ourselves for doubting our own gifts and abilities. We need to forgive others for helping us feel this way about ourselves. We need to accept Divine forgiveness and make ourselves whole.

Serving as a Doorkeeper

We all function as Doorkeepers in our life. People owing us some karmic debt from the past come into our lives to repay their debts. In this instance we act as Gatekeeper or Doorkeeper for that person. As soon as the debt is repaid, we open the door or gate for them. Likewise, other people to whom we owe a debt are keeping the Gate or Door closed until the debt is repaid. Then the gate or door opens and we may proceed.

We all function as Guards, Outer Guards and Sentinels in a similar manner. None may pass through the door or gate until he or she answers to us. The password required is the message to be delivered, a request for acceptance or forgiveness, or repayment of some past karmic debt. Opening the door or gate is a sign we received the message and we forgive her or him for all wrongs he or she committed against us.

Opening the door or gate for others means you give them the thing they need to continue their spiritual journey. This may be advice or counsel but it could also be acceptance, forgiveness and love. It will be something. As soon as you give whatever it is the other person needs from you, he or she will continue on his or her spiritual journey and so will you. Until you give the other person whatever it is he or she needs from you that person will continue to need something from you.

Anytime you have one or more needy people in your life, your best approach is to relax, and breathe deeply. In this state ask Spirit to help you open the door for this needy person or these needy people. Pay

attention. Be receptive. Accept whatever it is the other person or persons bring to you. *Open the door!*

Anytime you have one or more irritating people in your life, your best approach is to relax, breathe deeply and ask Spirit to help you open the door for this irritating person or these irritating people. Pay attention. Be receptive. Accept whatever it is the other person brings or persons bring to you. *Open the door!*

Again, we all function as Keepers in our lives. Keepers are basically guards. They guard invisible doors or gates through which others may not pass without first giving the proper password. We guard invisible gates or doors for others and they guard doors for us. How may others enter the doors we guard and how may we enter the doors they guard for us? By giving and receiving the correct password.

People owing us some karmic debt from the past come to us seeking they know not what. What they don't know is they're seeking to gain admission to a doorway or gateway blocking their spiritual path. To do this they need to give us the correct password or perform a necessary service to prepay their debt to us.

The door to the doorway blocking their advancement is closed to them until they repay this debt. The gate to the gateway they wish to enter is closed to them until they repay this debt. How they repay their debt to us is entirely up to us. We may, in all our stubbornness, insist upon an "eye for an eye," and a "tooth for a tooth." We may extract an equitable penalty from them and impose spiritual sanctions upon them. We may also, in loving kindness, accept the other persons, forgive them and love them. The choice is ours.

Think for a moment about the people in your life. The people who make you happy, the people with whom you enjoy sharing yourself, are not the guards keeping you from entering a doorway or gateway. Nor are you the guard keeping them from entering the paths they want to travel. Rather, the people guarding the doors you need to enter are troublesome people. These guards are the people who are not positive towards you, people who make your life difficult.

How are you treating the people who need to enter the doors you're guarding?

You're indifferent towards them. Some of them you don't even like. They're people who put you off, make you feel uneasy, or just plain ornery

people whom you avoid. Often they're the same people guarding a door you want to enter. In this case each of you owes a debt to the other.

Before we learn how to open these doors, it will serve us well to know what's behind these invisible doors. The answer is obvious once we think about it. Each door or gate guards a pathway, a pathway we want to travel but have so far been unable to find a way to do so. There are different pathways for different people. Each of us travels our own path and the gates or doors we need to open are placed on our path. These gates or doors are guarded by the people whom we've wronged in some manner at some time and in some place. These Gatekeepers or Doorkeepers expect the debt to be repaid.

For example, you're now engaged in the Minor Orders of the Church and studying the material for the Order of Doorkeeper. But before you could travel this path somebody had to open the door or gate for you. Think about it. This is something you may have wanted for a long time but you could never find the path to get here. Your way was blocked by a Keeper who guarded the door so you couldn't see the path beyond.

The karmic debt you repaid could have been anything. The Gatekeeper could have been anybody. You may never know, but the door was opened to you because you repaid the debt or the other person accepted, forgave and loved you despite your treatment of her or him or them. It's the repayment of this debt or the forgiveness of this debt that opens the door for you.

You don't need to know what the debt is. What you need to know is who the person is that guards the door or gate you want to enter. Then you need to know what that person wants or expects from you, or you need to heal the situation that exists between you. Meeting the needs and expectations of a person who is not positively disposed towards us is not always the best approach. This is particularly true when you don't know exactly what debt you're expected to repay. Healing the situation between you always works.

Identifying the person who is guarding a door you wish to enter is usually a matter of making a list of people you don't like, troublesome people who cause you discomfort whenever you think about them, and people who are a problem for you in one way or another. Think about the people in your personal life, at work, in the groups to which you belong and in the businesses you frequent. Make a list of all of them and keep adding to this list as new names come to mind. Don't worry about people from your past just yet unless those same people are also in your present life.

Add these people to your prayer list. Pray for them at least weekly asking the Divine to make their lives easier, to help them find happiness, joy, peace and love in their lives. Ask the Divine to soften their karma, to help them overcome the pain and suffering in their lives. Be sincere. Be firm in your intention to help these people in spite of their treatment of you, despite their reaction towards you. Believe the Divine will intercede on behalf of these people if you sincerely and honestly ask for Divine intercession.

Send healing and loving thoughts to these people. Send Divine unconditional love, the sublime healing energy of the Universe, to the other person to help him or her heal from any harm you may have intentionally or unintentionally caused.

During this healing meditation and supplication, spiritually ask the other person to forgive you for any harm you may have caused. Asking for forgiveness, even if there is nothing to forgive, is the password you need to encourage the other person to open the door or gate for you. This is not a suggestion to confront the other person and ask for forgiveness. It is a suggestion that in your prayers and healing meditations you ask the other person to forgive you. This asking is done during your meditation and prayers using the Divine as an intermediary. You do not speak directly to the other person on a physical level. You speak to them through the Divine on a spiritual level.

Identifying the people for whom you're guarding a door or gate is a process of identifying the people that continually bug you for one reason or another. These people don't go away. They don't know what they want. But every time you turn around there they are being a pest, getting in the way, bothering you by their very presence and causing you concern or embarrassment. They may visit you in person or in spirit, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically here and now or in your memory. Time is immaterial. What matters is they occupy your time, thoughts and feelings. That's because you're guarding a door or gate they want to enter.

Once you've identified these people all you need to do is pray for them and forgive them. Again, we don't suggest telling them face-to-face you forgive them. Do it in your meditation by using the Divine as an intermediary. Forgive them on a spiritual level. Tell the Divine you forgive them and open the door or gate for them. You don't even need to know what door or gate you're guarding and opening for them now. All you need to know is they sought forgiveness for some past wrong and you're

willing to sincerely forgive them for anything no matter how heinous it may have been.

We've talked about doors and gates. Doors lead to spiritual paths in this reality. Gates lead to spiritual paths in another reality. When you're guarding a door or a gate you really don't care what it is you're guarding. What you care about is resolution. You gain resolution by either requiring the other person to repay the debt or by forgiving him, her or them. By opening the door you release this person, and the situations caused by this person, so they don't bother you any more.

When somebody is blocking your progress by not allowing you to enter a door or gate you wish to enter, you don't care if it's a door or a gate. What you care about is resolving this situation so you both can get on with your lives. You do this by healing the other person, the relationship, and praying to the Divine to accept your apology and forgive you. Ask for Divine assistance in opening the door for you. Then do whatever the Divine asks of you.

We're all Doorkeepers and Gatekeepers. Most people go through life not knowing this basic truth. Now that you know, you have a responsibility to help yourself and others by opening doors for them. You have the ability to forgive others and you can develop the ability to heal others. This is the job of a Doorkeeper.

If you are willing to accept this responsibility, then you are invited to undertake the simple Rite of Empowerment below at or near the time of next new moon.

Rite of the Door Keeper

On or near the time of the next New Moon, follow these seven easy steps. Please remember, as in all spiritual work, your heart-felt intention is the key.

1. Set up your temple. Your temple may be located anywhere. You may use a small area of your home or all of outdoors. You may use a table, dresser top, closet or any small area you choose. You may use only an altar and a small standing space around it for your temple. Dedicate and consecrate this area by stating your intention, asking Spirit that it be so, and then by drawing an imaginary circle around the area. This can be done by outlining the area with your extended hand, finger pointing down. Mark off the area, bless it and declare that this is holy space. Treat it accordingly.

2. Prepare your altar. Your altar may be made of any substance and upon it you may place anything you desire. You may use any implements you desire such as candles, incense, water or wine, bread, oil, stones, etc. Bless these items and declare them to be sacred. Treat them accordingly.
3. Open your Rite with a prayer. Opening prayers are usually prayers of Thanksgiving, Blessing, and Supplication. We thank the Creator for all the gifts bestowed upon us. We ask for Divine blessings upon this holy space, the holy altar, the holy items placed upon the altar and ourselves. We ask the Divine to be present and to accept us as a Door Keeper.
4. Vow to the Divine to uphold the office of Door Keeper and to serve to the best of your ability; and be sure and ask the Divine to assist you in keeping and fulfilling these vows.
5. Anoint yourself with holy water or oil on your third eye which is above the bridge of our nose in the center of our forehead just above the eye ridge. In anointing yourself, say something such as; "In the Name of the Christ, I receive this holy anointing to perform the sacred duty of the Doorkeeper for the good of all."
6. Bless the alb or other suitable substitute clothing and dedicate it to helping you establish a holy space for sacred work whenever you put it on. Now, invest yourself with the white alb.
7. Close the Dedication Rite with prayers of thanksgiving, supplication and blessing. Close this holy space and return to this world.

Please remember that your intention throughout this Rite is not to impress anybody (including yourself) but to humbly and sincerely communicate with the Divine, take your vow and bless the work the Divine will hereafter ask of you. Having completed the ceremony you are an official and recognized Doorkeeper. You are now ready to go forth and do such work as the Divine asks of you.

The Service of the Doorkeeper

As a member of the Order of the Doorkeeper you are expected to continue looking for opportunities to open doors for other people and to discover what doors other people are opening for you.

Make it a daily practice to examine the troublesome people in your life. They trouble you because you have a door to open for them. Meditate and ask the Divine to reveal to you what door you need to open for each troublesome person. Contemplate those persons and ask for Divine guidance. Try to determine what it is you need to do for all the troublesome people in your life. Another approach is to ask these people

what you can do to serve them, or to help them; ask them what they need from you. It often happens that when we ask for Divine intervention, the Divine intervenes in the lives of others to help us identify the door we need to open.

Opening a door is always providing a service. Sometimes all we need to do is point these individuals in the right direction because the door is already open. Other times we need to do something, provide some service for them. Sometimes all we need to do is learn how to accept them and forgive them so they can get on with their lives. Whatever is required to open the door for them is our responsibility to discover.

Make this process of opening doors for yourself and others a daily practice while serving as a member of the Order of the Doorkeeper. Then continue this practice on a regular basis as part of your commitment to serve the Divine through the Minor Orders.

Blessings to you!