



From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church

Francis Aloysius Sullivan

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In this book distinguished theologian, teacher and writer Francis Sullivan examines the origins and development of the episcopacy in the early church. One of the issues he concentrates on in particular is the church-dividing character of the question whether bishops are the successors of the apostles by divine institution, with the consequence that valid ministry depends on ordination by bishops in the historical apostolic succession.

Ecumenical dialogues have produced no agreement on this matter. On the one hand Catholics, Orthodox and most Anglicans teach that episcopal ordination in the apostolic succession is necessary for valid orders and ministry. But Protestants insist that there is no evidence in the New Testament for a divine institution of the episcopate.

Using primary sources, Sullivan explores evidence for the development of the episcopate, first in the New Testament, then in Christian writings up to the middle of the third century. His thought-provoking work will be welcomed by professional theologians and serious students of theology, for whom it will prove to be an important resource for further ecclesiological study.

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