

Session 2 of 8 | Until the End of the Age

A Mission Handed On

Teaching, appointment, and the laying on of hands

Did the Apostles make provision for others to continue their work, or did they simply hope for the best?

Part One: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers in the Pastoral Letters a deliberate chain of transmission, sees that the chain carries a ministry and not only a message, and understands why Catholic apostolic succession involves more than repeating correct ideas.

Catholic Touchstone. The Apostles left bishops as their successors. Episcopal consecration confers the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, and priests share in the bishops' ministry as their co-workers. (CCC 77; 1555-1562.)

What You Need to Know

Second Timothy 2:2 is four links long. Paul taught Timothy. Timothy is to entrust the teaching to faithful people. Those people must be able to teach others. That is two generations past Paul in a single verse. The verse is about teaching, and it would be dishonest to make it say more than it says. It does say that the Apostles planned for transmission.

The other passages add ministry to message. Timothy received a gift "through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). He is to guard a deposit entrusted to him. Titus is told to appoint elders in every town, and those elders must hold to sound teaching and be able to correct error. Read together, these are not descriptions of enthusiasm. They describe a received ministry with obligations attached.

Be honest about the vocabulary. In Titus 1:5-7 the words "elder" (presbyter) and "bishop" (episkopos) appear to describe the same local ministers. The settled three-tier language of bishop, priest, and deacon is not fully fixed in the New Testament. Catholic teaching does not need it to be. It holds that the ordered ministry is continuous with the apostolic mission and that its terminology developed. By roughly the year 107, St. Ignatius of Antioch writes of bishop, presbyters, and deacons as three distinct orders. (CCC 1554.)

Acts 1 is supporting evidence, not the whole case. Matthias takes "the place in this ministry and apostleship" that Judas left. The requirement that he be an eyewitness from the baptism of John onward shows this is about restoring the Twelve. It also shows the Apostles treated their office as something another person could receive. Use it that way and no further. (CCC 860.)

Terms, in plain words

- **Presbyter:** the Greek word for elder, the root of our word priest.
- **Episkopos:** the Greek word for overseer, the root of our word bishop.
- **Deposit:** the body of teaching entrusted to the Church to be guarded and handed on, from the Latin depositum.

- **Apostolic succession:** the handing on of the Apostles' pastoral ministry through the bishops, by ordination and in the apostolic faith.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Numbers 27:15-23. Moses, facing death, asks God for a leader so that the people will not be "as sheep which have no shepherd." Joshua is publicly commissioned by the laying on of hands before the whole congregation. God's people are not left to improvise after a leader dies. The pattern is instructive. Joshua's commissioning is not Christian ordination, and the group should hear that difference from you.

Keep this distinction | leader only

Three things must stay distinct tonight. The Apostles as eyewitness foundation cannot be succeeded. The pastoral ministry they exercised can be, and was. Priests share in that ministry as co-workers of the bishops without holding the fullness of the episcopal office (CCC 1562). If someone blurs any two of these, restore the line gently.

Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome

Summary: The Apostles knew there would be strife over the office of bishop, so they appointed the men named above. Afterward they gave instructions that, when these died, other approved men should succeed to their ministry. Clement treats orderly succession as part of the apostolic arrangement itself.

First Letter to the Corinthians, 44

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Summary: The tradition of the Apostles is manifest in every church to anyone who wants to see it. Irenaeus says he can list the bishops the Apostles appointed and their successors down to his own day. A received faith and a recognizable ministry go together in his argument.

Against Heresies, III.3.1

Second Vatican Council

Summary: Episcopal consecration confers the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, the high priesthood. With the office of sanctifying it confers the offices of teaching and governing, which by their nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college.

Lumen Gentium, 21

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 77.** The Apostles left bishops as their successors so that the Gospel would be preserved whole and alive.
- **CCC 861-862.** Successors appointed by the Apostles, and the permanent office of shepherd handed on.
- **CCC 1554.** The three degrees of Holy Orders: bishop, priest, deacon.
- **CCC 1558.** Episcopal consecration confers the fullness of Holy Orders.

- **CCC 1562.** Priests as co-workers of the episcopal order.

Session Goals

1. Trace the four links of transmission in 2 Timothy 2:2.
2. Read teaching, appointment, and the laying on of hands together as a received ministry.
3. Distinguish bishops, priests, and the unique apostolic foundation without collapsing them.

Thread Watch | leader only

Collect the sealed guesses tonight without reading them. Thread A: develop the difference between passing on a message and receiving a ministry. Thread B, "received and handed on," is planted in Question 1 and returns in Sessions 6 and 7. Save any grand synthesis for Session 4.

Timed Plan | 75 to 90 minutes

Clock	Segment	If you only have 60
0 to 8	Opening prayer and Win. Collect the sealed envelopes	One Win question
8 to 28	Build, Questions 1 and 2	Keep
28 to 48	Build, Questions 3 to 5, with the live discovery	Drop Question 5. Assign 1 Timothy 4:14 for home
48 to 60	The objection, built then pressed	Keep
60 to 70	Send and Live It This Week	One Send question
70 to 75	Memory verse and closing prayer	Keep

For 90 minutes, let the Build discussion breathe and add the Dig Deeper passage at the end.

OBJECTION BENCH | leader only. Answers for questions that may come up. Do not read aloud.

If someone says: *Elders and bishops are the same thing in Titus. So there were no bishops over priests in the Bible.*

You can answer: The words overlap in Titus 1, and you are right to notice. What Titus himself is doing in that chapter, appointing elders in every town on Paul's authority, is what a bishop does. The role is there before the title settles. By Ignatius, around 107, the three titles are fixed.

If someone says: *Laying on of hands was just a blessing, like praying over someone.*

You can answer: Paul says a gift was given through it (2 Timothy 1:6) and tells Timothy not to do it hastily (1 Timothy 5:22). A blessing anyone can give is not something you are warned to be careful with. The texts treat it as conferring something.

If someone says: *Matthias replaced Judas because Judas betrayed Jesus. That is a one-time event, not succession.*

You can answer: Correct that it is about restoring the Twelve, and the study says so. But notice the language: Judas held an "office" (Acts 1:20, quoting the Psalm) and another man "takes his place." The Apostles did not treat the office as something that died with the man.

Answers at a Glance

One line per question, for the leader who needs to check quickly during the night. Full answers are in Part Two.

- 1.** Four links: Paul, Timothy, faithful people, others also. Transmission was planned.
- 2.** A gift through hands laid on, a deposit to guard, elders appointed who must teach soundly. Ministry, not only message.
- 3.** Matthias: another person receives an apostolic "office." Restoring the Twelve, and evidence that the office was receivable.
- 4.** Numbers 27: Moses asks for a shepherd, Joshua is commissioned by hands laid on. Precedent, not identity.
- 5.** Titus 1: elder and bishop overlap in words. Titus appointing them is the bishop's role before the title settles.

Part Two: Discussion Guide

Read aloud everything marked SAY, ASK, and READ. Keep everything marked LEADER to yourself. Share each parchment box only after the group has talked.

Opening Prayer

SAY Holy Spirit, help us receive the faith with humility and hand it on without distortion. Strengthen the bishops and priests who serve your Church, and make us faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Win | Begin with experience

LEADER Invite brief responses. Anyone may pass. Take one question if time is short.

ASK 1. What makes someone a trustworthy teacher of something that matters?

ASK 2. Have you ever been handed a responsibility you did not create? What did faithfulness to it require?

Build | Let the text lead

READ Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

ASK 1. Trace the movement of the teaching. Count the people in the chain. Who receives it, and who is expected to teach it next?

LEADER Get the group to four links: Paul, Timothy, faithful people, others also.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Paul taught Timothy. Timothy is to entrust it to faithful people. Those people must be able to teach others. That is four links and two generations past Paul in one verse. The goal is not new ideas but faithful transmission. This is clear evidence that the Apostles planned for their teaching to continue beyond the first generation. It is evidence about teaching. Notice what it does not yet say about ministry.

READ Read 2 Timothy 1:6, 13-14, then Titus 1:5-9.

ASK 2. What do these passages add to the picture? Look for a gift, an act of appointment, and a duty to guard something.

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Timothy received a gift "through the laying on of my hands," and he is to guard "the truth that has been entrusted" to him by the Holy Spirit. Titus is to appoint elders in every town, men who hold firm to the word and can teach sound doctrine and refute error.

So the chain carries more than a message. It carries a gift conferred by an act, a deposit to be guarded, and an appointment to office with standards attached. That is a received ministry with obligations, not personal enthusiasm for leadership.

READ Read Acts 1:15-26.

ASK 3. What is being restored when Matthias is chosen? What in the passage keeps us from treating it as the whole explanation of later succession?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Judas's "office" is given to another, and Matthias is numbered with the Eleven. The qualification, an eyewitness from John's baptism to the Ascension, shows the immediate purpose is to restore the Twelve as witnesses. So it is not a template for every later bishop. It does show that the Apostles treated their office as something another person could receive. The Church's full teaching rests on the wider apostolic witness and Tradition, not on this chapter alone. (CCC 860-862.)

Live Discovery

SAY Search the later chapters of Numbers for Moses asking God to provide a leader so the people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

LEADER Allow a short search. Supply Numbers 27:15-23 only if the group is stuck. Then have someone read the passage the group found.

ASK 4. What is Moses afraid of for the people? What resemblance do you see to tonight's New Testament passages, and what difference must remain?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Moses does not want the people left "as sheep which have no shepherd." Joshua is commissioned publicly, by the laying on of hands, before the whole congregation. God's people have never been left to improvise after a leader's death. The resemblance to Timothy and Titus is real. The difference is also real. Joshua's commission is not Christian ordination, and New Testament ministry has to be understood through Christ, not through Moses.

READ Look again at Titus 1:5-7.

SAY This time watch the titles. Verse 5 says one word and verse 7 says another.

ASK 5. What two words does Paul use for the men Titus appoints? What is Titus himself doing in these verses?

ANSWER | share after the discussion

Verse 5 says "elders" and verse 7 says "bishop," and they seem to describe the same local ministers. The titles overlap at this stage. Notice what Titus is doing, though. He is appointing ministers in every town on Paul's authority. That is the work a bishop does, whatever it is called yet. The office is present before the vocabulary settles. Within a generation St. Ignatius names bishop, presbyters, and deacons as three distinct orders. (CCC 1554.)

A Serious Objection | build it, then press it

SAY Here is the objection at full strength. Some of you may have heard it from a friend, or thought it yourselves.

THE OBJECTION | read aloud

"Second Timothy 2:2 describes discipleship. Any Christian can teach another Christian, and that is all Paul is asking. Nothing in the verse says the teacher must be a bishop in an unbroken chain of ordinations."

"Worse for your case, Titus 1 uses elder and bishop for the same people. The three-tier structure Catholics have today is not in the New Testament. If the offices were that important, Paul would have spelled them out. What you have is a developed system read back into a few verses about appointing local leaders."

ASK Is teaching the only thing we read about tonight? What do appointment, the laying on of hands, and the duty to guard the deposit add? And is the vocabulary problem as serious as it sounds?

LEADER Let the group try to answer from the passages read tonight before you share the response. Do not rescue the discussion too early.

CATHOLIC RESPONSE | share after the discussion

The first half is partly right. Ordinary discipleship really is part of what 2 Timothy 2:2 means, and Catholic teaching does not deny it. The Catholic case never rested on the word "teach." It reads the transmission of teaching together with a gift conferred by the laying on of hands, the appointment of ministers in every town, and a charge to guard the deposit. The pattern is cumulative.

The second half is honest and deserves an honest answer. The titles do overlap in Titus 1, and the Church does not require the New Testament to use later terminology with technical precision. What it claims is that the ordered ministry itself is continuous with the apostolic mission and that its names developed. Titus appointing elders on Paul's authority is the episcopal role in action. By the early second century St. Ignatius speaks of bishop, presbyters, and deacons as distinct. The Church receives this threefold ministry in apostolic Tradition. (CCC 77; 1554-1562.)

Send | Respond personally

ASK 1. How can gratitude for the Church's ministers strengthen, rather than replace, your own duty to learn the faith?

ASK 2. What would help you hand on one teaching more faithfully than you do now?

Live It This Week

Pray. Pray each day this week for your diocesan bishop and your parish priests, by name.

Learn. Read CCC 1554, 1558, and 1562. Write one sentence on how a bishop's ministry and a priest's ministry are related.

Hand on. Explain one thing from tonight to someone this week, using the passages rather than an analogy.

Scripture Memory

"Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us."

2 Timothy 1:14 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

SAY Lord Jesus, you remain the Shepherd of your people. Give your ministers fidelity and holiness. Teach us to receive the truth with grateful hearts and to share it with patience and love. Amen.

Part Three: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used tonight, in the order it appears. Materials: RSV2CE Bibles for everyone, this guide, and the Take-Home sheets to hand out at the end.

When	Passage	Purpose
1	2 Timothy 2:1-2	Four links of transmission
2	2 Timothy 1:6, 13-14; Titus 1:5-9	Gift, deposit, and appointment
3	Acts 1:15-26	Matthias receives an office
4	Numbers 27:15-23	Live discovery: a shepherd after Moses
5	Titus 1:5-7	Elder and bishop: overlapping titles
Memory	2 Timothy 1:14	Guarding the deposit

Dig Deeper | 1 Timothy 4:14 and 1 Timothy 5:22

Timothy's gift came "when the elders laid their hands upon you." Then Paul warns him, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." Read both with 2 Timothy 1:6. A rite that confers a gift, and that must not be done carelessly, is more than a prayer of good wishes. Do not treat these verses as competing accounts of ministry. They are three angles on one act.

After the meeting

Hand out Take-Home 2. Do not distribute this answer-bearing leader guide as a participant workbook.