



The Holy See

HOLY MASS WITH EPISCOPAL ORDINATIONS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Feast of Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Monday, 19 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Beloved Brothers and Sons,

It will do us good to consider carefully the great ecclesial responsibility to which these brothers of ours are being raised. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father to redeem the human race, in turn sent the Twelve Apostles into the world so that, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, they might proclaim the Gospel to all peoples and unite them under one Shepherd, and that they might sanctify them and guide them to salvation.

In order to perpetuate this apostolic ministry from one generation to the next, the Twelve chose other men to share in their work. Through the laying on of hands, they passed on to them the gift of the Spirit which they themselves had received from Christ, thereby conferring the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders. Thus, through an uninterrupted succession of bishops this prime ministry has been preserved in the living Tradition of the Church, and the work of the Saviour continues and develops to our own day.

In the bishop surrounded by his priests, Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, is present in your midst. Indeed, it is Christ who, through the ministry of the bishop, continues to preach the Gospel of salvation and to sanctify believers by means of the sacraments of faith. It is Christ who, through the paternal role of the bishop, draws new members to his Body which is the Church. It is Christ who, in the wisdom and prudence of the bishop, guides the People of God on their pilgrimage until at last they reach eternal bliss.

Therefore, welcome with gratitude and joy these brothers of ours whom we bishops are about to receive into the Episcopal College by the laying on of hands. Render to them the honour that is due to the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God, to whom the testimony of the Gospel and the ministry of the Spirit for sanctification have been entrusted. Remember Jesus' words to the Apostles: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16).

Now, dearest brothers, chosen by the Lord, consider that you have been chosen from among men and for men; you have been appointed to the things pertaining to God. Not for other things, not for business, not for worldliness, not for politics. Indeed, "episcopacy" is the name of a service, not of an honour, since a bishop must strive to serve rather than to rule, according to the Master's commandment: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all". Flee from the temptation to become princes.

Proclaim the Word on every opportune and inopportune occasion. Admonish, reproach, exhort with all magnanimity and doctrine. And, through preaching and offerings of the Sacrifice for your people, draw from the fullness of the sanctity of Christ the manifold richness of God. The Bishop's prayer is the first task of the Bishop. When the Hellenist widows went to the Apostles to complain that they were being neglected, the latter gathered together and with the power of the Holy Spirit they created the diaconate. And when Peter explains this, what does he say? "Do this, this and this; it is up to us to pray and proclaim the Gospel" (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The first task of a Bishop is prayer. A bishop who does not pray, does not fulfil his duty, does not carry out his vocation.

In the Church entrusted to you, be faithful custodians and dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. As the Father has placed you at the head of his family, always follow the example of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and is known by them and who did not hesitate to lay down his life for them.

Love with a fatherly and brotherly love all those whom God entrusts to you. First the presbyters and deacons, your co-workers in the ministry. Please be close to the presbyters, please: may they find the bishop on the same day that they seek him, or at most, the following day. Closeness to priests. But also closeness to the poor, to the defenceless and to those in need of acceptance and help. Encourage the faithful to work with you in your Apostolic task; be ready to listen to what they have to say.

Pay careful attention to those who do not belong to the one fold of Christ, because they too have been entrusted to you in the Lord. Remember that in the Catholic Church, made one by the bond of charity, you are united to the College of Bishops and you must carry within you the solicitude for all the Churches, generously helping those who are most in need of assistance.

And watch, watch lovingly over the whole flock, among whom the Holy Spirit places you in order to

support the Church of God. And do this in the name of the Father, whose image you make present; in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, by whom you were constituted teachers, priests and shepherds and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and whose power sustains us in our weakness.