



The Holy See

EPISCOPAL ORDINATION

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Friday, 4 October 2019

[Multimedia]

Beloved Brothers and Sons,

Let us 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, the same Lord, 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; not for yourselves but for the things pertaining to God. 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".

Proclaim the Word on every opportune and inopportune occasion. Proclaim the true Word, not mundane discourses that no one understands. Proclaim the Word of God. Remember that, according to Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, the two main tasks of the bishop are prayer and proclaiming the Word (cf. 6:4); then all of the other administrative matters. But these two things are the pillars. And, through preaching and offerings of the Sacrifice for your people, draw from the fullness of the sanctity of Christ the manifold richness of the divine grace.

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. Closeness to your people. The three aspects of a bishop's closeness: closeness to God in prayer — this is the first task; closeness to priests in the presbyteral college; and closeness to the people. Do not forget that you have been taken, chosen, from the flock. Do not forget your roots, those who have passed on the faith, who gave you identity. Do not forget the People of God.

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. But also love the poor, the defenceless and 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 — this would be the fourth aspect of closeness — and you must carry within you the solicitude for all the Churches, generously helping those who are most in need of assistance. Safeguard this gift that you are receiving today through the imposition of hands of all of us bishops.

Watch lovingly over the whole flock, among whom the Holy Spirit places you in order to support the Church of God. Keep watch 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.