



The Holy See

HOLY MASS WITH EPISCOPAL ORDINATIONS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*St Peter's Basilica
Sunday, 17 October 2021*

[Multimedia]

Dearest brothers and sons,

Consider carefully, the position in the Church to which our brothers are about to be 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. These men were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel to all people and gather them under one Shepherd, to be guided and governed in the way of holiness.

In order to perpetuate this apostolic ministry from one generation to the next, the Twelve selected others to help them. By the laying on of hands, which confers the sacrament of orders in its fullness, the apostles passed on the gift of the Holy Spirit which they themselves had received from Christ. In that way, by a succession of bishops unbroken from one generation to the next, the powers conferred in the beginning were handed down, and the work of the Savior lives and grows in our time. In the person of the bishop, with his priests around him, Jesus Christ, the Lord, who became High Priest for ever, is present among you.

Through the ministry of the bishop, Christ himself continues to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation and to sanctify believers through the Sacraments of the faith. Through the fatherly action of the bishop, Christ adds new members to his body, which is the Church. Through the bishop's wisdom and prudence, Christ guides the People of God in the earthly pilgrimage towards eternal

happiness.

Gladly and gratefully, therefore, receive our brothers whom we are about to accept into the college of bishops by the laying on of hands.

You, dear brothers, have been chosen by the Lord. Remember that you are chosen from among men and appointed to act for men and women — not for yourselves but for others — in relation to God. The title of bishop is in fact a title of service — it is not a true episcopate without service —, not of honour as the disciples wanted, one on the right, one on the left, because a bishop should strive to serve rather than to rule, according to the Commandment of the Master; “whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (*Lk 22: 26*). To serve. And with this service you will uphold your vocation and be true shepherds in service, not in honours, in power, in might. No, to serve, always to serve.

Proclaim the Word at every occasion whether it is welcome or unwelcome; correct error and exhort with unfailing patience and teaching. And through prayer and the offer of sacrifice for the people committed to your care, draw every kind of grace for them from the overflowing holiness of Christ. You will be stewards of the faith, of service, of the charity in the Church and for this you must be *close*. Consider that *closeness* is the most typical trait of God. He himself says this to his people in Deuteronomy: “what great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us”? (cf. *Deut. 4:7*). Closeness, with two accompanying traits: a closeness that is compassion and tenderness. Please, do not leave aside this closeness, draw near to the people. always draw near to God, draw near to your brother bishops, draw near to priests. These are the four forms of closeness of the bishop. The bishop is a man close to God in prayer. Very often one might say: “I have so much to do that I cannot pray. Stop. When the apostles “invented” deacons, what did Peter say? “we — the bishops — will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (cf. *Acts 6:4*). The first task of the bishop is to pray — not like a parrot — to pray with the heart, to pray. “I do not have the time”. No! Remove other things, but prayer is the first task of the bishop. Closeness to God in prayer. Then, the second form of closeness, closeness to the other bishops. “No, because those belong to that party, I belong to this party...”. Be bishops! There will be arguments between you, but as brothers, close to one another. Never speak badly of your brother bishops, never. Closeness to the bishops: the second form of closeness, to the episcopal body. The third form of closeness is closeness to priests. Please, do not forget that the priests are the closest of the close. Very often we hear complaints, when a priest says: “I called the bishop but the secretary told me his diary is full, that perhaps, within 30 days, he might be able to see me...”. This is not good enough. If you find out that a priest has called, call him the same day or the next day. And with this, he will know he has a father. Closeness to priests, and if they do not come to you, go to them: closeness. And the fourth form of closeness: closeness to the holy People of God. As Paul said to Timothy: “Remember your grandmother and your mother” (cf. *2 Tim 1:5*). Do not forget that you have been “taken from the flock”, not from an elite that has studied, that has many qualifications and who must be a bishop. No, from the flock. Please, do not forget these four

forms of closeness: closeness to God in prayer, closeness to bishops in the episcopal body, closeness to priests, and closeness to the flock. May the Lord let you grow on this path of closeness, so that you will better imitate the Lord, because he has always been and is near to us, and with his closeness that is compassionate and tender, he leads us forward. And may Our Lady keep you.

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