



The Holy See

HOLY FATHER ORDAINS NINE BISHOPS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF ST JOSEPH

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Monday, 19 March 2001

1. *"Here is the wise and faithful servant, whom the Lord has put in charge of his household" (cf. Lk 12: 42).*

This is how today's liturgy presents St Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Guardian of the Redeemer. He was the wise and faithful servant who, with obedient docility, accepted the will of the Lord, who entrusted him with "his" family on earth to watch over it with daily devotion.

St Joseph persevered in this mission with fidelity and love. The Church, therefore, offers him to us as an exceptional *model of service to Christ* and to his mysterious plan of salvation. And she calls upon him as the *special patron and protector* of the whole family of believers. In a special way, Joseph is presented to us on his feast day as the saint under whose powerful protection divine Providence has wished to place the persons and ministry of all who are called *to be "fathers"* and *"guardians"* among the Christian people.

2. *"Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously'.... "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2: 48-49).*

In this simple, family conversation between Mother and Son, which we heard a few moments ago in the Gospel, we find *the characteristics* of Joseph's *holiness*. They correspond to *God's plan for him*, which he, being the just man that he was, would fulfil with marvellous fidelity.

"Your father and I have been looking for you anxiously", Mary said. *"I must be in my Father's house",* Jesus replies. It is precisely these words of the Son that help us to understand *the mystery of Joseph's "fatherhood"*. In reminding his parents of the primacy of the One whom he called "my

Father", Jesus reveals the truth about Mary's and Joseph's role. The latter *was truly Mary's "husband" and Jesus' "father"*, as she affirmed when she said: "Your father and I have been looking for you". But his being a husband and father is *totally subordinate to that of God*.

This is how Joseph of Nazareth was called, in turn, to become one of Jesus' disciples: by dedicating his life to serving the only-begotten Son of the Father and of his Virgin Mother, Mary. It is a mission that he continues to carry out for the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, to which he never fails to give his provident care, as he did for the humble family of Nazareth.

3. In this context, it is easy to turn our attention to what is the centre of our celebration today. I am about to lay hands on nine priests who are called to assume the responsibility of Bishops in the Church. In the Christian community the Bishop fulfils a task that has many similarities to St Joseph's. This is well expressed in the *Preface* of today's solemnity, which describes Joseph as "that wise and loyal servant, whom you placed at the head of your family.... With fatherly care he watched over Jesus Christ your Son". In the Church Pastors are "fathers" and "guardians" who are called to act as wise and loyal "servants". They are entrusted with the daily care of the Christian people, who, with their help, can confidently advance on the way of Christian perfection.

Venerable and dear ordinands, the Church gathers round you and assures you of her prayer, so that you can fulfil your pastoral ministry with faithful generosity in the likeness of St Joseph. Those who are accompanying you on this festive day assure you particularly of their prayer: your relatives, priests, friends and the communities from which you come and to which you are being sent.

4. The episcopal ordinations that I usually confer on Epiphany were postponed this year because of the closing of the Great Jubilee. I thus have the opportunity to celebrate this rite on today's feast, which is so dear to the Christian people. This allows me to entrust each of you, with particular insistence, to the constant protection of St Joseph, patron of the universal Church.

I greet you very warmly, dear friends, and with you I greet everyone who shares your joy. I sincerely hope that you will continue with renewed generosity the service that you are already giving to the Gospel cause.

5. You, Archbishop Fernando Filoni, are entrusted with the mission of Apostolic Nuncio in Iraq and Jordan, to support the Christian communities dispersed throughout those lands: I am sure that you will be a messenger of peace and hope for them. You, Archbishop Henryk Józef Nowacki, after working for many years at my side, will be the Apostolic See's representative in Slovakia, an ardent herald of the Gospel in that country of ancient Christian tradition. And you, Archbishop Timothy Paul Broglio, to whom I am grateful for the faithful cooperation you offered the Cardinal Secretary of State, will go to the gateway of the American continent as Nuncio in the Dominican Republic and Apostolic Delegate in Puerto Rico: be a witness among those dear people to the

affection of Peter's Successor.

And I am grateful to you, Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, for your valuable service in the Secretariat of State and now, as I entrust you with the Prelature of Pompei and its renowned Marian shrine, I place your ministry under the benevolent gaze of Our Lady of the Rosary, asking her to guide your way in the footsteps of St Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, your native land, and the boast of Campania. May the Blessed Virgin continue to watch over your steps too, Bishop Tomasz Peta, who are called to assume the Apostolic Administration of Astana in Kazakhstan, where you have already been working for several years with praiseworthy apostolic zeal.

You, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, will continue your valued service as Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of Social Sciences, institutions which I consider very important for the Church's dialogue with the world of culture. And I wanted to entrust you, Bishop Marc Ouellet, with the office of Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a task of particular significance for the very noble goal that inspires it and for the fresh hopes that the celebration of the Jubilee Year has stirred in the hearts of many Christians. And you, Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, will assume the role of Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, continuing with greater responsibilities your already distinguished service in that dicastery. Lastly, I affectionately embrace you, Bishop Djura Dzudzar, whom I have chosen as Auxiliary to the Eparch of Mukacheve in Transcarpathian Ukraine, a country which, God willing, I will soon have the joy of visiting and to which I now send a cordial greeting.

6. Dear Brothers, like St Joseph, the model and guide for your ministry, *love and serve the Church*. Imitate the example of this great saint, as well as that of his Wife, Mary. If you occasionally encounter difficulties and obstacles, be ready and willing to suffer with Christ for the sake of his Mystical Body (cf. *Col 1: 24*), so that you can rejoice with him over a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, holy and unblemished (cf. *Eph 5: 27*). The Lord, who will not fail to give you his grace, today *consecrates you and sends you as apostles* into the world. Keep his words engraved on your hearts: "I am with you always" (*Mt 28: 20*), and do not be afraid. Like Mary, like Joseph, always trust in him. He has overcome the world.