



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS OF PAUL VI
TO WEST ASIA, OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

PRIESTLY ORDINATION

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

*«Luneta Park», Manila
Saturday, 28 November 1970*

*Dearly beloved Sons and Brothers,
Newly ordained priests of God's Church,*

We will only say a few short words, because the ceremony is long enough already and speaks for itself; then too, you are already well informed concerning the sacrament which you have received.

We will do no more than recommend you to meditate on your ordination for the rest of your lives.

Today sees the beginning for you of a subject for thought, prayer and action, which you must always recall, examine, explore and seek to understand. It must be stamped on your consciousness, just as the sacramental character is already stamped on your souls, on your being as men, on your being as Christians. Think of it! Today you have become priests! Try to give a definition of yourselves and the words come with effort and difficulty; the reality which they try to express is still more difficult, mysterious and inexpressible. What has taken place in you makes one truly marvel; «How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?» (*Ps. 115: 12*) each of you can say, on feeling himself invested by the transforming action of the Holy Spirit. You become for yourselves something to wonder at and revere. Never forget it. Though the world does not know of it, and though many seek to strip the priest's personality of it, your "sacrality" must be kept ever present in your minds and in your conduct. It derives from a new qualifying presence of the Holy Spirit in your souls; if you are watchful in love, you will also experience it within you (*Cfr. Jo. 14: 17; 14: 22-23*). Never doubt your priestly identity; seek rather to understand it.

You will be able to understand something of your priesthood by trying to comprehend two orders of relationships set up by it. The first order concerns the relationships with Christ which you have taken on by your priestly ordination. You know

that in the religious dispensation of the New Testament there is only one true priesthood, that of Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and mankind (1 *Tim.* 2: 5). But by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders you have become sharers in Christ's priesthood, so that not only do you represent Christ, not only do you exercise his ministry, but you live Christ. Christ lives in you. Inasmuch as you are associated with him in a degree that is so high and so filled with a sharing in his mission of salvation, you can say, as Saint Paul said of himself: «I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me» (*Gal.* 2: 20). This is something that opens to the priest the way of ascent for his spirituality, the highest way open to man, one that reaches the summits of ascetical and mystical life. If ever some day you feel lonely, if ever some day you feel that you are weak secular men, if ever some day you are tempted to abandon the sacred commitment of your priesthood, remember that you are «through him, with him and in him»; each one of you is «another Christ».

The second order of relationships linking you from now on to the Church is that with your bishop or superior, with the People of God, with persons, and also with the world. The priest is no longer for himself; he is for the ministry of Christ's Mystical Body. He is a servant, an instrument of the Word and of grace. The proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist, the remission of sins, the exercise of pastoral activity, the life of faith and worship, and the radiation of charity and holiness are his duty, a duty that reaches the point of self-sacrifice, of the cross, as for Jesus. It is a very heavy burden. But Jesus bears it with his chosen one and makes him feel the truth of his words: «My yoke is easy and my burden light» (*Matth.* 11: 30). For, as Saint Augustine teaches us, «my weight is my love» (S. AUG., *Conf.*, 13: 9). When love of Christ becomes the single supreme principle of the life of a priest, it makes all easy, all possible, all happy.

We would like the awareness of being thus destined as a pastor to serve your neighbor never to be extinguished within you; We would like it to make you always sensitive to the ills, the needs and the sufferings which surround the life of a priest. All classes of people seem to stretch out their hands to him and to ask for his understanding, his compassion and his assistance: children, young people, the poor, the sick, those who hunger for bread and for justice, the unfortunate, the sinners - all have need of the help of the priest. Never say that your lives are irrelevant and useless. «Who is weak», says Saint Paul, «and I am not weak?» (*Cor.* 11: 29). If you have this sensitivity to the physical, moral and social deficiencies of mankind, you will also find in yourselves another sensitivity, that to the potential good which is always to be found in every human being; for a priest, every life is worthy of love. This twofold sensitivity, to evil and to good in man, is the beating of Christ's heart in that of the faithful priest. It is not without something of the miraculous, a miracle that is psychological, moral and, if you like, mystical, while at the same time being very much a social one. It is a miracle of charity in the heart of a priest.

You will experience it. That is Our wish for you on the day of your ordination to the priesthood. And with Our wish goes Our Apostolic Blessing.

And you, dear children making your first Communion today, what shall We say to you?

The most beautiful thing to say is this: stay always, for all your lives, as you are today: good, religious, innocent, and friends of Jesus who is now coming into your hearts. Maybe you know that Jesus had a very special love for children, and that he said to everyone : «Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven» (*Matth.* 18: 3), that is to say, unless you are like children you will never be real Christians and go to heaven. We must always be like little children. But what can we do? We grow up, and life changes.

But let one thing never change for you, dear children: always remember this day, and promise Jesus that you will always be his friends, with humility, simplicity and trust. His friends, even when you are grown up; always friends of Jesus. Will you promise that? You will see that Jesus will accept your promise, and will always be your friend, for ever.

We will pray to him together that it may be so. With Our affectionate blessing.

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