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## **Two men ordained priests in joyful Mass**

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"Relying on the help of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose these, our brothers, for the Order of the Priesthood," Bishop Samuel Aquila said during the July 1 ordination Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral in Fargo. Then the ordinands, Deacons Neil Pfeifer and Chris Markman, turned to face the faithful in the pews and loud, enthusiastic applause greeted them.

Then they sat down for the homily. "You, in a particular way, are called and chosen," Bishop Aquila told the ordinands, referring to the first reading from Deuteronomy 7:6-11, which tells of how God chose those who were "really the smallest of all nations" and brought them "out with his strong hand from the place of slavery, and ransomed [them] from the hand of Pharaoh."

Speaking to the ordinands, Bishop Aquila said, "You, my dearest sons, have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ, by the heart of Christ." Then he spoke of God's mercy. "God has loved us first as sinners. He has loved even the most egregious sinner," he said. "On the day a man is ordained he is never perfect. If he thinks he is perfect, then he misunderstands the Gospel, he misunderstands Christ."

Holiness and perfection grow each day, Bishop Aquila said, as people die to self and live in intimacy with Jesus. "You will be able, by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, to act in the person of Christ, the head and shepherd of the church. . . . You will share as a coworker of the bishop in apostleship," Bishop Aquila told them.

"Always preach Christ and the faith of the church," he said. "It is essential that you proclaim Christ and what he has done for you. Learn from Peter. Learn from Paul. Learn from Christ himself. . . . Hand on what you have received. Hand on the Gospel. Hand on Jesus." He continued, "You must be confident in your leadership in all that Christ accomplishes. It is not a confidence in yourself, but it is a confidence in Christ."

The ordination Mass continued and those to be ordained priests promised to exercise their ministry worthily and wisely and promised respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors. During the Litany of Supplication, the faithful prayed for them. Then, in silence, Bishop Aquila imposed his hands on the head of each ordinand as a sign of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The priests present did the same.

Following the prayer of ordination, Father Markman and Father Pfeifer were given and put on their stoles and chasubles. Bishop Aquila anointed their hands with sacred chrism and presented to them the bread and wine, urging them to imitate the mystery they will celebrate.

As a sign of union in the ordained ministry, the bishop and priests gave the sign of peace to the newly ordained. When Father Paul Duchschere, former vocation director, came to Father Pfeifer, the new priest lifted up Father Duchschere in a "bear hug" and muffled laughter could be heard from the pews.

Throughout the Mass, smiles were abundant and people watched closely as each part of the ordination Mass progressed. During the Eucharistic prayer, a young boy sitting with the Markman family whispered, "Lift me up so I can see."

After the recessional, the new priests returned to the front of the cathedral for photographs, and family members and friends sought first blessings from them.

Men, who only two hours before, were brothers, sons, uncles, cousins and friends, were now also priests — spiritual fathers, whose families now include the faithful throughout the Diocese of Fargo.