

“You are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood.”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

June 27, 2015

*Ordination of Priests
St. Mary's Cathedral
Fargo, ND*

With a joyful heart, I welcome all who have come to join us for this very happy day in the Diocese of Fargo. I especially welcome my brother priests, who are here in such great numbers; my brother deacons and their spouses, our dear religious sisters, and all the faithful, particularly the families of these young men. From Mount St. Mary's Seminary, I greet Msgr. Steven Rohlf, the rector; and representing the Pontifical North American College, I greet our own Fr. Michael Hicken. We are indebted to the formators in the seminaries who have done so much to prepare Deacon William and Deacon Kyle for this day and for their priestly lives.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, these our sons, who are your relatives and friends, are now to be advanced to the Order of Priests. Let us reflect together on the nature of the rank in the Church to which they are about to be raised.

We know that God has made his entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ. But, Jesus Christ, who is our great High Priest, also chose certain disciples to carry out publicly in his name, on behalf of all mankind, a priestly office in the Church. Christ was sent by the Father, and he in turn sent the Apostles into the world, so that through them and their successors, the bishops, he might continue to exercise his office of Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd. Indeed, priests are made co-workers of the Order of Bishops. They are joined with the bishop in the priestly office, and with the bishop they are called to serve of the People of God.

After careful and serious deliberation, these men, our brothers, are now to be ordained to the priesthood in the order of the presbyterate. They are ordained to serve Christ, the Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd, by whose ministry his Body, the Church, is built up and grows into the People of God, a holy temple.

In being configured to Christ the eternal High Priest and joined to the priesthood of the bishops, they will be consecrated as true priests of the New Testament. They will preach the Gospel, shepherd God's people, and celebrate the sacred liturgy, especially the Lord's Sacrifice. They will remain men, with all the weakness of their humanity, but they will become priests of God for all eternity, "other Christs" in their service to God and his Church.

Now, dear sons, you are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood. You join the ranks of holy priests throughout the centuries: St. John Vianney, St. Maximilian Kolbe, Venerable Michael McGivney, and our own pioneer priests like Fr. George Belcourt. For your part, you will exercise the sacred duty of teaching in the name of Christ the Teacher. Impart to everyone the word of God which you have received with joy. Meditate constantly on the word of the Lord, that you may believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.

Let what you teach be nourishment, spiritual food for the People of God. Let the holiness of your lives be a fragrance to all Christ's faithful. Not only by your words but also by your example, by your actions, build up the house which is God's Church.

You will also carry out the sanctifying work of Christ; that is, you are to lead God's people to holiness. By your ministry the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful will be made perfect, for it is united to the Sacrifice of Christ, which, through your hands is offered up in an unbloody way on the altar in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. When you celebrate the Mass, understand, therefore, what you do and imitate what you celebrate. As celebrants of the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, strive to put to death whatever within you is sinful, and to walk always in newness of life.

Remember, through Baptism, you gather others into the People of God, into new life in Christ. Through the sacrament of Penance, you forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church. You are to be servants of the mercy of God; always show his mercy to his people. With holy oil you will comfort the sick and prepare them for eternity. You will offer prayers of praise and thanks to God throughout the hours of the day, not only for the People of God but for the whole world. Remember then that you are taken from among men and appointed on their behalf to attend to the things of God. Therefore, carry out the ministry of Christ the Priest with constant joy, Gospel joy, and with genuine love, attending not to your own concerns but to those of Jesus Christ.

Finally, dear sons, exercising for your part the office of Christ, Head and Shepherd, in communion with your bishop and subject to him, strive to bring the faithful together into one family, so that you may lead them to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. Always keep before your eyes the example of Christ the Good Shepherd, who came not to be served but to serve, and who came to seek out and save what was lost.