

Homily
Priesthood Ordination
June 4, 2022

“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit, fruit that will remain.” Dear friends, this is a joyful day for the Church. I am happy to welcome all of you who have come to celebrate the ordination of the two men who stand before us. In a particular way, I greet all of our priests who have come to pray with and for their new priest brothers, and especially those who have come from St. Paul Seminary and helped them reach this day. I also welcome the families and friends of our ordinands. You have played a special part in bringing them to this joyful moment.

The Church teaches us that the entire holy People of God is made a royal priesthood in Jesus Christ. But Jesus, the Great High Priest, chose certain of his disciples to exercise a public priestly office in his name. “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.” The call to priesthood is and always will be a mystery. There are some who know from an early age that they are called to be priests, and then there are others who become aware of this call years later. In either case, “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.” These words of Jesus to his apostles are spoken just as truly to every priest.

It is Jesus who calls us, and it is a call from his heart, a call to be one with him in his ongoing work among his people; a call to be his voice of truth, his hands of healing, his heart of compassion. The priesthood is a gift of love to the one who is called, a sign of the great love that our Lord has for this chosen man. But it is also a sign of his love for the Church. When he calls one to be his priest, he does so for the sake of all his people, he is caring for them through this man who becomes his chosen instrument. The priesthood is a great gift of Jesus Christ to his Church, a gift of grace, and a fulfillment of his pledge that he would not leave us orphans. He is still with us in a particular way through his priest.

After long years of prayer and preparation, these brothers of ours are to be ordained today to the priesthood, and through their priestly ministry, our Lord will continue to build up his Body, the Church. They will share in Christ’s mission of teaching, shepherding, and sanctifying God’s people, acting not on their own and not for personal gain, but always acting in the name and in the person of Jesus Christ. The call they receive is a mystery, but they will remain the men we have known, and so they will need our prayers. Let the whole Church pray for our new priests, and for all those whom our Lord calls to serve him.

My dear sons, you are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood, and so you will now exercise the teaching office of Christ himself. Be sure to meditate constantly on the Word of God and the sacred doctrine of the Church, so that you will be able to nourish God’s people at the font of truth. Abide in that truth so that you may believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach. And let the holiness of your lives draw others to the holiness of Christ.

You will also exercise in Christ the office of sanctifying. Through your priestly ministry, God will impart his saving grace to his people, especially in the sacrifice of the altar. You are beginning your priesthood just as the Church enters into a great Eucharistic Revival, a time for

all of us to rediscover the gift and mystery of our Lord's sacrifice of his own body and blood. Let the Eucharist, which is Christ himself, be the center of your priestly lives, and through your priesthood, draw others to the power and grace of his death and resurrection. As you stand at last at the altar and offer our Lord's sacrifice to the Father, understand what you do, and imitate what you celebrate. Model your life on the gift that Jesus gives, his life for the life of the world.

Yours will be a ministry of mercy. Through Baptism, you will welcome souls into the family, and even into the very life of God. Through the sacrament of Penance, in the name of Christ, you will offer the gift of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation. You will heal and strengthen the sick and the weak with sacred oil, and accompany souls as they prepare for their final journey to God. Through you Christ will extend his mercy to those you serve, just as he did to the leper and to the sinner.

Finally, dear sons, strive to be good shepherds after the heart of Christ. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, and so must you in all the daily works of the priest. Our Holy Father reminds the priests of our time that sometimes they must walk ahead of the flock to lead them on the right path. Sometimes the shepherd must walk in the midst of the flock to reassure them that they are not alone. And sometimes the shepherd must walk behind the flock to make sure no one is left behind, to carry those who need a little extra help. Strive to gather the faithful together into one family, so that you, as a shepherd, may lead them to God the Father, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. Look for inspiration to the great priest saints who were called by our Lord just as you are: men like St. John Vianney, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. John Henry Newman, and so many others. You might face the headwinds of our times, just as they did, and just as the apostles did. But never forget our Lord's words: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit, fruit that will remain." You have been called, and now you will be sent in the name of Christ. Keep always before your eyes the example of our great High Priest and Good Shepherd, who did not come to be served but to serve, and who came to seek and save what was lost.