

## Homily – Ordination to the Priesthood

We join the disciples today at a very pleasant place on a hot day – a beach on the Sea of Tiberias. What happens there, however, is much more profound. Getting out of his fishing boat, Peter sees the risen Lord – standing by a charcoal fire! What emotions might have arisen in the disciple, remembering how he had denied even knowing Jesus three times a few weeks earlier at a charcoal fire in the high priest's courtyard. This is a moment of conversion, of forgiveness, of renewed commitment. In response to Jesus' questions, Peter affirms his love for the Lord three times. The risen Lord tells him to carry on Jesus' own role as the Good Shepherd – tending the flock. As Pope Francis says "all pastoral ministry is born of love."

My brothers, the Lord repeats those same words to you today: "Feed my lambs. . . Tend my sheep. . . Feed my sheep." And he adds, as he said to Peter, "Follow me." Follow in my footsteps. Imitate my example. Put into action what you have learned from me.

What had Peter and the others learned? To proclaim the good news of God's enduring love to the afflicted, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to forgive the

sinner, to overcome – with God’s grace – the powers of evil at loose in the world. To comfort those who mourn, to challenge the complacent, to feed the multitude.

As priests, you are to shepherd others patiently, knowing that you too have weakness and vulnerability (Heb 5:2). You will teach the people you serve about our common responsibility to defend and nurture the precious gift of every human life. Our ministry embraces not only for those who attend church and visit our offices but also to those on the margins of society, the forgotten, the neglected, the lonely, the oppressed, the unloved. Today you are ordained priests – to proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel of God’s enduring love for every person – especially by your attitudes, your actions, your expressions of love, mercy, and compassion.

The risen Lord says: Follow me. Shortly you will receive the sacramental gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. May Our Lady, the Mother of the Church, embrace you with her maternal love and teach you the ways of her beloved Son, Jesus the Lord. Embrace the wonderful gift of the priesthood and share it generously, faithfully, and fully with all whom you are called to serve!