

**Homily – Episcopal Ordination of Msgr. Robert M. Coerver  
November 21, 2016**

**This is a day of great joy for the Diocese of Lubbock and the Province of San Antonio! For, today we ordain a new bishop, the third episcopal leader since the establishment of this Diocese.**

**Robert, we gather this afternoon with your family and friends – old friends who have supported you in the past, especially in Dallas and Plano, and new ones whom you will love and serve as a bishop and who have already reached out to you with prayerful support.**

**We are grateful to Archbishop Michael Sheehan and Bishop Placido Rodriguez for their dedicated episcopal ministry in Lubbock.**

**Robert, the readings you have chosen for your episcopal ordination help to shape our reflection. You are called to exercise the prophetic ministry described by Isaiah in the first reading. Anyone who hopes to exercise this ministry effectively must be willing to get close to people, the kind of people Isaiah describes: the lowly, the brokenhearted, the captive, the imprisoned, those who mourn. People want you to be close to them so that you can touch their lives with Jesus' healing power. You need to know them intimately so that you can relate the gospel to their daily lives.**

To be an effective bishop you must be willing to get your hands dirty. No matter how confusing, messy, or bewildering life may seem, it is there that you will encounter the Lord. You will not find him in fancy vestments or fixed formulas; you will not find him in complex structures or in bricks or mortar, as important as these may be at times for the well-being and good order of the faith community. You will encounter him in the lives of the people you serve.

My brother, Robert, you have responded generously to the Holy Father's appointment. You have heard again – at a deeper level – the call of Jesus: follow me. Today, the Lord asks you, as he asked Simon Peter, “Do you love me?” I know you love him, and the Lord knows you do. But he has to hear it from you: Yes, I love you, Lord. Then he says “feed my lambs...tend my sheep... feed my sheep.” As St. Augustine pointed out, Jesus tells Simon Peter: tend my sheep as mine, not as yours. You are to follow the example of the Good Shepherd – guiding the flock entrusted to you through authentic teaching and preaching, caring for the community of believers, giving of yourself to the point of laying down your life for your flock. This ordination does not give you a superior position; nor is it a question of Simon Peter's or your special worthiness. Rather, it

shows how the risen Lord works through failing and weak disciples -- as we all are.

Pope Francis has often spoken about the kind of bishop the Church needs today. He also has been an eloquent model of such a leader. As he says:

Bishops must lead, which is not the same thing as being authoritarian. . . Bishops must be pastors, close to people, fathers and brothers, and gentle, patient and merciful. Men who love poverty, both interior poverty, as freedom before the Lord, and exterior poverty, as simplicity and austerity of life. Men who do not think and behave like “princes.” Men capable of watching over the flock entrusted to them and protecting everything that keeps it together: guarding their people out of concern for the dangers which could threaten them, but above all instilling hope: so that light will shine in people’s hearts. Men capable of supporting with love and patience God’s dealings with his people. The Bishop has to be among his people in three ways: in front of them, pointing the way; among them, keeping them together and preventing them from being scattered; and behind them, ensuring that no one is left behind,

but also, and primarily, so that the flock itself can sniff out new paths.

Robert, be in front of your people, be among them, and be behind them. You are being entrusted with the Lord's own flock.

Through the imposition of hands God will send his Holy Spirit upon you with all the gifts you need to carry out your episcopal ministry faithfully. As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, I, too, urge you: "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands." The sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit will empower you to be a good bishop!

Today is the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the Mother of the Church, a temple in whom God dwelt in a special way as the Mother of Jesus. Our Lady of Guadalupe promises to be with us, telling us not to fear the darkness, the violence, the hatred that is so much a part of our world. She is the protector and liberator of the poor, the downtrodden, the neglected.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe be always at our side, teaching us, by her image and her example, true Christian witness, authentic discipleship.