

Homily 8 28 21 Priestly Ordination Missionhurst Fathers

Jer1:4-9 Heb 5: 1-10 JN 21: 15-17

This year on Good Shepherd Sunday after Easter, Pope Francis ordained nine men to the priesthood for the Diocese of Rome. During the homily the pope said: “You will be shepherds like him. This is what he wants of you. Pastors. Pastors of God’s holy faithful people. Pastors who go with God’s people: sometimes in front of the flock, sometimes in the middle or behind, but always there with God’s people.”

Always there with the people. My brother to be ordained for the Missionhurst Fathers today, that is your mandate. You are a missionary. That is your call, to be there with people wherever you are sent. Always be there with the people. Most of all remember that your call is to feed the people, especially with the Word of God, what has fed you all your life and what now nourishes you to accept your vocation today. Never forget that this is what you are ordained to do, to care for the people, especially the most vulnerable, listening to them, sharing in their joys and their sorrows, being a part of their lives and serving them as Christ showed us. Most of all, always feed them. They seek to be fed. They want to be fed. Christ calls you to do just that.

The call of a priest is to be a person who is close. The pope urged the new priests to seek “closeness” to God, their bishop or superior, their fellow priests, and the People of God throughout their priestly service. He described this as the “four closenesses of the priest.”

What a beautiful reminder of how we must live our priesthood! All of us priests who gather with you, soon to be our brother in the priestly ministry, should ask ourselves today how we have been living these closenesses.

Our closeness to God comes with daily prayer, Eucharist and preaching, which must take a priority in our lives. Our closeness with the bishop or superior is shown in respect and collaboration, as we gather to serve our people. Our closeness to our brother priests comes in fraternity, as we support and care for each other. Our closeness to the people comes in humility, service and identification with them, especially the poorest. The Holy Father reminds us and urges us to live the call and practice closeness every day.

This gospel reading today from John is during a post resurrection appearance to the disciples at the edge of the lake. Jesus has just helped them have a miraculous catch of fish, after which they recognize him as the risen Lord. This story helps to show that their missionary effort is a result of the risen presence and power of Christ. Only with him can they be successful. On their own power they can do nothing. Jesus is recognized here as the nourisher, by helping them catch fish and then cooking breakfast for them. Jesus feeds them physically. It is after this that he commands Peter in turn to feed his sheep.

Jesus had every right to demand an apology from Peter for the way he betrayed Jesus during the passion. Peter is rehabilitated three times to match the offense of denying Jesus three times. He is then

sent to do mission. Jesus had shown Peter nothing but love, so now he was asking Peter to remember that love and respond with love.

Loving Jesus is serving and feeding the people. "Feed my sheep." People want to be fed. Not only in the eucharist or in the homily but also the people want to be fed and nourished by seeing and experiencing others who live faith, who despite calls to divide and hate, live out the covenant that says if you are healthy and well so am I. What changed Peter from a denying, fearful, misunderstanding tepid disciple to the fearless evangelizer? Jesus simply asks him to search his heart for the love that Jesus had shown him, which nourished and fed him. Be grateful for that love and then use that love to feed others.

All who love Jesus will remain with each other. This means what we ask of God in Jesus' name we get, namely joy in perfect fulfilling of God's will. This is the joy of living the gospel. It manifests itself in many ways, especially by a constant smile to all and a great sense of humor. These lift up people we meet. To offer a positive and happy life for others is the ultimate act of a Christian. It certainly is the life of the priest. Be a happy priest! Share the joy!

Love is rooted in action. Thanksgiving results in generous action, namely the giving back and offering of one's life for others. The priest does that best when he is willing to listen to the people, enter into their experiences and walk with them in accompaniment. Your preaching and teaching come from this attitude of a listening heart.

We priests in a special way are called to abide with Jesus. Always continue to grow your friendship with Jesus throughout your life as a priest. Today is a day you attach yourself to Jesus and the Church in a new and profound way.

When love is given to us, it implies a responsibility as well. It must be shared. The ultimate showing of love by Jesus was to carry the cross and give his life. The willingness to offer your life is central to the paschal mystery. It will involve suffering, but suffering is the classroom in which one learns obedience to God. The gospel today points us in that direction.

Finally, Pope Francis at this year's Mass of Chrism spoke to the priests assembled of the grace of amazement. Jesus' relationship with the people was marked by *the grace of amazement*: the amazement of the people who saw Jesus, listened to his teaching with authority and felt his compassionate presence. Jesus himself also expressed amazement at the faith of the people. Jesus took the time to listen to people and to understand their petitions and their faith and in doing so he was amazed by what he experienced in them. Allow yourself throughout your priesthood to be amazed by the faith of your people and pray to have that kind of faith for yourself.

It is with much joy that the Church and your community call you today to be a priest and surround you in prayerful support. May the God of joy y nuestra Madre de Guadalupe accompany you every day of your ministry!