

Preisthood Ordination

It is always an enormous honor to be the instrument of the Holy Spirit in laying hands upon those called to the priesthood and, in prayer, invoking upon them the grace of the Holy Spirit which will seal them into Christ's eternal priesthood.

To those who have supported them with love, understanding, prayer and positive encouragement through the years I express, in the name of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and of the whole Church, my deepest appreciation. Parents and other family members, seminary classmates, members of the seminary formation teams beginning with the rectors, pastors and parishioners in the parishes where our deacons have served as interns - to you and to all others who have helped along the way, a thousand thanks!

(Isaiah 61: 1-3) In this Jubilee year the priests to be have selected the reading from the prophet Isaiah which Jesus himself used to describe his mission. Mission is clearly the operative word. It describes what one is sent to do. This week astronauts climbed around a space station orbiting the earth to carry out a mission, to fix the station, change its batteries, ready it for a greater, future use.

So, our new priests are equipped for, and sent on a mission. It involves more than fixing something mechanical and electronic. As they reminded me in choosing the reading, they are ordained in the year of the Great Jubilee. We celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the coming of the Son of the living God among us. And in this year of grace they are sent to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord. Their call is to cut through the static of daily living with the message that God's love for each one of us is incredibly strong, and that it calls for our response, in faith and hope and love.

The year of favor they announce is one in which all should hear that Jesus asks

something of us: a faith response in works of charity, justice and peace. Most of all, we are invited to respond to God's love with our own, to go forward with a greater measure of trust in the great Good Shepherd.

(Eph. 4:1-7, 11-13) The second reading, in its own language, is a letter written from an Apostle, Paul, who is in jail. "I plead with you as a prisoner for the Lord..." he begins. He pleads for a life of virtue. "...Live a life worthy of the calling you have received, with perfect humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another lovingly." These are the very ways of acting that Jesus exemplified. Courage, quiet courage, coupled with obedience to the Father and respect for all God's sons and daughters, made in the divine image and likeness.

A mission impossible, it might seem. Coupled with the call to virtue is the mandate to build unity in the Body of Christ. "Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force." To this end, our new priests-to-be have been studying in the seminary, that is, the school of Christ, what they must do to respond to the Holy Spirit's action of grace in their lives. They must give time, each day, to be in conversation with their God. They must walk the way of self-discipline Jesus laid out for them: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up the cross each day, and follow in my steps." (Luke 9:23)

They make this human contribution in partnership with the Holy Spirit whose power is to be at work in their lives. They will witness the struggle between good and evil, between grace and sin. They will be part of that struggle. Their prayer and their self-denial prepare them also to let flower in their lives God's special gifts to each of them, gifts of natural talent and gifts of the supernatural order, helping them to help others in the discernment of God's will and ways in their lives.

(John 17:6, 14-19) The Gospel passage they have chosen is selected from the Last Supper discourse of Jesus to his own. It is, the Church remi