

# Priesthood Ordination 2012

## **I. Introduction**

Long ago, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the Risen Lord Jesus looked at Simon Peter and three times asked him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Today, in this sacred rite of ordination, the Lord Jesus looks upon you, my dear brothers, called now to be priests of the Church, and He asks you, "Do you love me?"

For the priestly ordination you are about to receive requires a response of love – a love that you will show by the pastoral care you will offer God's people, a love you will manifest by your spirit of loving communion with me and with your fellow priests, by your faithful proclamation of God's Word and devout celebration of his mysteries, and by a life of daily, sustained prayer, . . . all for the glory of God and sanctification of his people.

## **II. Promise of the Elect**

Thus, in a few moments I shall ask you if you are ready to fulfill the responsibilities of the priesthood – but not as though you are about to enter into a private, specialized practice. On the contrary, you are being asked to take on not only those parts of ministry that you naturally find appealing but rather to embrace all the responsibilities of the priesthood and all the people whom you are sent to serve, and to do this as a co-worker with the bishops of the Church and with your fellow priests. As you hear me put this question to you, hear rather the Lord Jesus asking you, "Do you love me?" Do you love me enough to embrace the priesthood in a spirit of loving service, to shoulder the various forms which the demands of love will take? Do you love me so much that you will exercise your office with humility, looking toward the needs of others rather than your own? As you strive daily to accept in joy the demands of priestly ministry, may you answer each day, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!" Then it is that the Good Shepherd will say to you, "Tend my sheep!"

Moments from now I shall ask if you are resolved to preach the living Word of God in season and out, in loving fidelity to all that the Church believes and teaches. For the Word we that we preach is not our own;

but rather it is the Word of the One who was so closely united to the Father that he could say: "My Word is not mine, but his who sent me!" As you carefully prepare and

deliver homilies and offer instruction, as you offer a word of love to the broken hearted, to those held captive by sin and injustice, to those alienated from the Church, and to those who have never truly heard the Gospel of life and salvation . . . hear the Lord commanding you, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep!”

In but a moment I shall ask if you are resolved to celebrate, devoutly and worthily, the mysteries of Christ, the Mass & Sacraments, in accord with the Church’s Tradition. And I shall inquire whether you are prepared to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as wise and compassionate confessors, to be attentive to the sick and the dying,

to lead couples to the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony – and to do all this not for yourselves but rather to give God glory by being the living instruments of His saving love. When I put these questions to you, hear not me, but rather the Risen Lord asking, “Do you love me?” As you resolve afresh each day to be a worthy celebrant of the Lord’s sacrificial love, to be the living and effective signs of his Paschal Mystery – do not hesitate to say – “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!” And every time you offer Mass or celebrate a Sacrament allow the Shepherd who became the sacrificial lamb to say to you, “Feed my lambs, feed my sheep!”

Similarly, moments from now I shall ask if you are prepared to continue developing a life of daily prayer, centered on the Eucharist and enriched by faithfully praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Moments before you are sacramentally transformed by the Holy Spirit such that, in your depths, the identity of Christ the High Priest comes to life, I shall ask if you are prepared to unite yourselves more closely to Christ each day, . . . indeed to be consecrated in the very Sacrifice you offer, in such a way that you can make a sincere gift of self to Christ and to the people you serve. Again, in these questions, hear not my voice but the voice of the Risen Christ saying: “Do you love me?” – Stephen, Isaac, Steven, Jaime, Jason, David, and John: “Do you love me?” It is by growing in holiness, by having an interior life that corresponds to the dignity and beauty of the Office that the Church entrusts to you today, that you will answer the Lord Jesus, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!” Prayer is what readies us to tend the flock entrusted to us.

### **III. Continued Questions**

Simon Peter was hurt because Jesus asked a third time, “Do you love me?”, yet, I

urge you, dear brothers, never be hurt by that question. Allow the Lord Jesus to challenge you with that question every day of your lives. Ask Him to put that question to you in times of sorrow, in times of joy, in times of temptation, and in times of frustration, as well as in times of consolation and of accomplishment.

Many paths have led you here to this moment of priestly ordination – you come from an array of places and cultures – Kenya, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and yes, Maryland! Four of you for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and one of whom is sponsored by the Archdiocese for the Military Services; and three of you for the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter and one of you will also serve in the Archdiocese for the Military Services. You have made a journey of faith that led you from the Anglican communion to fullness of faith in the communion of the Roman Catholic Church. Dear brothers all, we rejoice in your priestly ordination! We are united in deepest prayer with you on this day of grace that changes your lives forever.

For as Blessed John Henry Newman once said of those called to priestly ordination: “They who enter Holy Orders promise, they know not what, engage themselves, they know not how deeply, debar themselves of the world’s ways, they know not how intimately, [and] find perchance they must cut off from them the right hand, sacrifice the desire of their eyes and the stirring of their hearts at the foot of the Cross, . . . while they thought in their simplicity they were but choosing the quiet, easy life of plain men dwelling in tents . . .”

Through the prayers of Mary our Queen, whose reigns in the Kingdom of Heaven because in loving obedience she shared fully in the sacrifice of Christ, may you have the joy and grace to say each day of your life, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!”