

# **Priestly Ordination of Michael Rubeling, Cathedral of Mary Our Queen**

## **I. Introduction**

A. Most commencement speakers cannot resist the urge to advise the graduates, who have been hard at work on their degrees for four long years, how to be successful, both personally and professionally. I must confess that most of us bishops cannot resist the same urge at Ordination. There's something about an occasion like this that makes me want to preach a homily on how to succeed in the priesthood. Dear friends, you will all either be delighted or dismayed to learn that, once again, I have given in to this urge.

B. So, Michael, even though you have come from a wonderful, faith-filled family, and have pursued your priestly formation wholeheartedly for these past four years at the Pontifical North American College and for the preceding years at Our Lady of Providence - I will nonetheless offer you three keys to priestly success and joy. I hasten to add that I do not define success as clerical advancement but rather as a holy priestly life that bears the abundant fruit of the Gospel. I also hasten to add that these are not three purely personal tips but are in fact the three pillars upon which every saintly priest has built his ministry. They are, in Latin: Crux, Hostia, and Virgo - in English: the Cross, the Eucharist, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. For a few moments, let us reflect together on these three pillars: they are the ordinary tools of every Christian's life but they are also essential for priestly joy, holiness, and fruitfulness.

## **II. Crux = Cross**

A. Let us begin with the Cross. In today's second reading, St. Paul proclaims Christ crucified: "For the love of Christ," he says, "impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all so

that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (II Cor. 5:14-15).

B. Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh, died for us, when all of us were spiritually dead because of our sins. Lifted high upon the Cross with his hands outstretched Jesus accomplished for all times the great high priestly act: he offered himself for us and for our salvation on the altar of the Cross. Having preached the Good News and healed the sick, he revealed the self-giving love at the heart of the Trinity by laying down his life. This is the central act of divine mercy in all of human history, the hour when God's tender love for suffering humanity was most fully revealed. In laying down his life for us, Jesus is most clearly "the face of the Father's mercy".

C. This is not merely a matter of poetry, art, or still less, sentimentality. Rather, Michael, the Cross is to be the driving force of your priestly life. Fix your eyes daily upon the Crucifix, from which you will hear the voice of Jesus praying for his executioners. As you open your heart in prayer to the Heart pierced for our salvation, may you become ever more that priest whose whole life proclaims "the message of reconciliation" - the message of God's mercy and forgiveness. This is a message you are to proclaim not only in the pulpit and the confessional, but also in your own humility as a penitent and in the simplicity of your style of life, as well as in the depth of your self-giving love for others, especially the poor. The message of mercy must pervade your whole bearing as a man and as a priest, and manifest itself in the pastoral charity of your day-to-day ministry, especially when you are tired and your patience is worn thin. May your whole life as a priest be modeled on the Cross of our great High Priest!

### **III. Hostia = Eucharist**

A. If the Cross is the model of your life and ministry, the Eucharist is its summit. Indeed, the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the Christian life; ... and that is especially true in the life of any priest who desires a joyous & fruitful ministry. It all begins with your personal devotion to the Eucharist, rooted in the deep-seated conviction of the early martyrs that we cannot live without the Eucharist - "sine dominico non possumus!" The celebration of Mass and prayer before the Blessed

Sacrament must be mainstays in your daily routine, yes, even on your day off. As you strive to lead a life of chaste celibacy and wholehearted love for others, there can be no substitute for genuine intimacy with the Eucharistic Lord.

B. Such intimacy will affect how you engage in pastoral ministry: how you preach and how you celebrate the Church's sacraments. In all you say and do in the Church's name, be a Eucharistic missionary. Raise up in the parishes where you will serve missionary disciples who will help you gather in those who are absent from Sunday Mass. Be a priest who loves the Eucharist so much that you will encourage many vocations to the priesthood. And as you confront the task of preaching, do not shrink from it – do not say, 'I am too young, I am too inexperienced, I am beyond my comfort zone.' Rather, through the prayer of the Church, the imposition of my hands & the anointing, allow the Holy Spirit to form in you the image of Christ the High Priest. In the very person of Christ, you will evangelize, preach, and instruct so as to gather as many as possible around the Eucharistic table.

C. As you baptize, hear confessions, prepare couples for marriage, and help parents and families fulfill their role in spreading the Gospel, you will, at the same time, lead them in rooting their entire lives in the Eucharist. After all, offering Mass is not merely a skill you acquire or a function you perform. Rather, from now on, your whole existence is given over to the sacred task of re-presenting Christ, the head and spouse of his Body the Church, so that God's People can share in the sacrifice of love offered once-for-all on Calvary... ..and thus join together in offering their lives in loving worship of the Triune God. For the Eucharist is the bond of unity that binds the whole Church together and it is also the font of the Church's charity, especially for the poor and vulnerable, as well as for the Church's ministries of justice and peace, life and family.

## **IV. Virgo = Blessed Virgin Mary**

A. A third pillar in your priestly life and a condition for its success as, God defines success, is true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. For it is Mary who teaches us priests how to listen prayerfully to the Word of God and how to allow that Word to take root deep within our hearts. It is Mary who teaches us how to consecrate our lives entirely to God through simplicity of life and a chaste

celibacy tied to pastoral charity; and above all to cooperate with God's plan of salvation for us and for his People in a spirit of loving, open-hearted obedience to all that the Church asks of us. Mary exemplifies how we are to reach out to our people in charity just as she hastened to her cousin Elizabeth in her hour of need. So too Mary, for all her privileges, was first, foremost, & always a disciple of the Lord who shared most deeply in her Son's death and resurrection. Mary will daily urge us, her priests, first to be good disciples lest we become mere religious professionals who suffer from "spiritual worldliness". Finally it is Mary who will lead you to stand with her beneath the Cross so that you will bear witness to the Crucified and Risen Lord at every moment.

B. So, Michael, may the Rosary always be a part of your daily devotion as well as other forms of Marian prayer, so that you might meditate on the mystery of Christ through the eyes of Mary and thus help the people you serve to remember well what he has done to save us.

## **V. Conclusion**

Crux, Hostia, Virgo: the Cross, the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary - three realities at the heart of the priestly life you are about to undertake. May you embrace all three every day, Michael, and thus spend your life in love united with me, your bishop, and with your brother priests in the service of the people of this great Archdiocese. Welcome—dear son, dear brother! May God bless you and keep you always in his love!