



Homily – Ordination of Priestsⁱ

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*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels
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My brother bishops, priests and deacons; religious and consecrated men and women; seminarians; my young brothers who are about to receive Holy Orders; all of you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

We are celebrating this morning a special moment of grace and joy as we ordain our brothers — Augustine, Ernesto, Francisco, John, José de Jesus and Michael — to the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

This is a beautiful day for our great Church of Los Angeles.

So let us thank God for these young men and the gift of their lives in the priesthood.

Let us promise to pray for them and for all our priests. And let us renew our promise to pray every day that many men will join them in answering the call to the great adventure of the priesthood.

I would like to address some personal words to these young men this morning. But I hope these words will also help all of us to reflect a little on our own Christian vocations.

Not everyone is called to the priesthood. But all of us are called to holiness of life and to the service of Jesus Christ. So as we pray for our newest priests today, let us also ask for the grace to renew our own vocations and to carry out God's will in our own lives.

My young brothers who are about to receive Holy Orders: In the Gospel we have just heard, it tells us that *the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord!*

This is the secret that every priest knows in his own personal way: There is joy in the Lord's presence!

The priesthood is not about power or prestige. It is not an office or an occupation. It is a sacrament. It is a response to God's call to serve souls.

Christ gives us the great dignity to minister *in persona Christi*, in his person. You are called to be *other Christs*. This is not a metaphor or a pretty idea. You *are* his voice and his hands.

As his priests, you will bring Jesus to the world, my brothers! And in Jesus the world has life and salvation. That is truly something awesome.

Jesus Christ came to serve, not to be served. He came to *give his life* as a ransom for many.ⁱⁱ

As his priests you are consecrated to this same service, to this same giving of your lives. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has said that the priesthood is “a fellowship of service *for God and with God*.”ⁱⁱⁱ

You are being ordained to serve souls — *for God and with God*. Like the apostles in the Gospel we have just heard, you will *receive the Holy Spirit* from Jesus Christ.

And as he sent his apostles into the world, now he is sending you out to be his priests.

As we hear in the first reading today from the prophet Isaiah, you are anointed with the Spirit to bring good tidings to the lowly; to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to those in captivity.

Your priesthood is a ministry of reconciliation through the healing love of God.

My brothers, the gap that separates men and women from God is growing wider every day in our society.

Many people feel that God is remote from the concerns and cares of their lives. More and more people today say they do not believe in God or in any religion.

This is so sad. And it is unacceptable to God.

Our Father created all men and women because he loves us. Because he wants all of us to live together with him in his love, as one family of God! This is why he made the world. This is why he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross and rise from the dead to redeem us.

You, my brothers, are receiving Holy Orders today to continue God’s great mission of creation and redemption.

As Jesus did, you must show people the merciful face of God our Father.^{iv} You are given his Spirit to grant Christ’s own forgiveness, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation!

Working with God’s grace, you are called to sanctify men and women, through his Word and sacraments. In the Eucharist, you are called bring people to Jesus Christ — in his Body, Soul, Blood and Divinity — as bread that is broken for the life of the world.

What a privilege your priesthood is! What a gift your priesthood is to our Church and our world!

But it is not about you, my brothers. It is all about Jesus Christ.

As St. Paul says in today's second reading, you must devote your duties — to preach the Gospel and to teach. In your speech and conduct, you must be a model of love, faith, and purity.

Day by day, you must conform your lives more closely to the mystery of his cross. More and more, you have to live "Eucharistically" — offering your lives to our Father, united with his sacrifice.

As you know, my brothers, the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity. Through the one sacrifice you offer, Jesus Christ by the power of his Holy Spirit makes our Church one body healed of all division.

You are called to work with this Eucharistic grace to keep the family of God in communion of mind and heart with our Holy Father and with the universal Church, as together we seek God's Kingdom.^v

I urge you: Always stay united in a special way to your brother priests. Young and old, we priests share in this fellowship of service for God and with God.

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict has said: "Fidelity to one's vocation requires courage and trust. But the Lord also wishes that you *join forces*. That you be *concerned for one another and support one another* fraternally. Moments of common prayer and study, and sharing in the demands of the priestly life and work, are a necessary part of your life. It is a fine thing when you welcome one another into your homes with the peace of Christ in your hearts! It is important to assist one another with prayer, helpful advice and discernment!"^{vi}

My brothers, I pray that you will always help one another in this beautiful ministry of service to souls.

We are a missionary Church here in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. I have come to see that more clearly in this past year. We have a special responsibility for the new evangelization — not only for the new evangelization of Los Angeles and California; but also for the new evangelization of our country, our continent, and our world.

I have been thinking a lot about Blessed Junípero Serra, the Hispanic Franciscan who is called the "Apostle to California."

You are called to be missionary priests like him, my brothers. I hope you will study his life and look to him as an inspiration and an intercessor in your own priesthood.

Blessed Junípero lived his priesthood with a zeal for souls. He took joy in his daily duties of preaching and teaching, hearing confessions, offering Mass, and saying his prayers.

He loved the native peoples of this continent with the heart of Jesus Christ. He learned their local languages, customs and beliefs. And with great love, he translated the Gospel and the prayers and teachings of the faith so that everyone could hear the mighty works of God in their own native tongue!^{vii}

In all this, he is a model for your priesthood, my brothers. In you ministries, you must find a way to “translate” the Gospel of love for the people of our times.

Blessed Junípero Serra used to trace the sign of the cross on people’s foreheads and say to them, *Ama a Dios! Love God!*

This became a form of greeting throughout the California missions: *Amar a Dios!*

And my brothers: I believe this is a beautiful sign of what you are called to do in your ministry of service in our great city and Archdiocese.

Through your ministries, you must trace the sign of the cross on every person you meet. You must trace the sign of the cross, this great sign of God’s love, on our city and our world.

This is a mission for all of us who are baptized, my brothers and sisters. In everything we do, in all our words and actions, we must proclaim to our city and our world, *Amar a Dios! Love God!*

So as we prepare now for our brothers’ ordination, let us all ask the intercession of the patroness of this great Archdiocese, Our Lady of the Angels. Let us all pray for the grace to love God more deeply and to serve our brothers and sisters in love.

ⁱ Readings: Isa. 61:1–3; 1 Tim. 4:12–16; John 20:19–23

ⁱⁱ Matt. 20:28.

ⁱⁱⁱ Homily, Conclusion of Year for Priests (June 10, 2010).

^{iv} John 14:9.

^v Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I.

^{vi} Homily, Celebration of Vespers with Priests, Religious, Seminarians and Deacons (Fátima, Portugal, May 12, 2010)

^{vii} Acts 2:8, 11.