

ORDINATION OF FATHER ROB LUPO

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

May 16, 2008

What a blessed day for all of us gathered in this cathedral, indeed, for the entire Catholic Church in Maine! With hearts full of gratitude, we are about to receive from God the gift of a new priest. The evangelization that began in Maine four centuries ago takes another step forward as Rob Lupo is ordained a priest forever. This is truly a day the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice!

We must consider carefully what it is that we are about to do. This liturgy of ordination must be understood in the context of what we are as Church. Ordained priesthood has no meaning apart from that. God has made his Church, his holy people, a royal priesthood in Christ. Every baptized person participates in that common priesthood, sharing in Christ's mission as prophet, priest and king. Every Christian bears responsibility for the Church's mission, especially the work of evangelization, inviting others by word and witness of life to come to know the Lord Jesus and his message of salvation. Evangelization, the reason for the Church's very existence, transformation of the world. And, like the worship of God, it is the work of us all.

At the same time, from the very beginning Christ has chosen certain of his disciples to carry out the priestly office, in his name and in his very person as Head of the Church. In that ministry, ordained priests serve Christ, the Teacher, Priest and Shepherd, so that God's people might grow in holiness, live deeply in communion, and go confidently about the mission given to the Church by Christ. Today by sacred ordination, our brother Rob will be configured to Christ the Eternal High Priest. In this liturgical action, which will effect a profound change in this man's very being, he will be joined with me in my ministry as bishop and with his brother priests in the presbyterium of this diocese. Today he will be consecrated a true priest of the New Covenant, to preach the Gospel, celebrate the Eucharist and other sacraments, and shepherd God's people. I beg your prayers for him as he receives this wondrous gift and takes up such an awesome task at this time when our diocese is committed to telling anew the story of Jesus.

Rob, the ritual instructs me now to address you. First, thank you for hearing the Lord's call and for saying yes. As we are reminded in John's Gospel, you did not choose Christ. He chose you to go forth and bear fruit. You know well as a man of deep faith that something profoundly mysterious and radically transforming is about to happen to you. Through the laying on of hands and the prayer of consecration, you will, by the power of the Holy Spirit, become a priest forever. The ministry to which you are called and ordained is most serious. On it depends the sanctification and salvation of souls. As Jeremiah was sent to proclaim God's word, so you, commissioned an evangelist, will preach that word and bear witness to it by the way you live. You will become a steward of the mysteries of God, exercising sacred power that comes from Christ himself and is for the building up of God's people. You will be a doctor of souls, ministering the compassion of Christ the Good Shepherd in sacrament and pastoral charity. Through you, Christ the Head of the Body will be present among his people. Always rejoice in

and call forth the gifts of the lay faithful, and do not fail to listen to and collaborate with them, even as you teach, lead and sanctify them.

Your ministry as priest will demand much of you. Attend always to the Lord's call to grow in holiness of life. Your growth in holiness will be shaped by the way you approach the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, and the work of pastoral charity. Every dimension of the diocesan priest's life and ministry has the potential with God's grace to bring you along with your people more deeply into communion with Christ.

Prayer is at the heart of the matter for every Christian and, I would dare say, so much the more for us who are priests. Pray faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours in its entirety. Not only is it your sacred obligation to pray in this way for the Church and, with the Church, for the world. There are also abundant graces awaiting us in our daily immersion in the psalms and other prayers of the Divine Office.

Along with the Hours, commit yourself to a faithful discipline of personal prayer. This is how intimacy with Christ is nourished and sustained. Pray faithfully and deeply, for this how we remain gratefully aware that we are Christ's friends as well as his servants, as John 15 has reminded us. Hear the wisdom of Cardinal Walter Kasper:

As the authorized servant of Jesus Christ, the priest must at the same time be the friend of Jesus Christ. Friendship with Jesus Christ should be the most profound and ultimate motive that gives one courage to become a priest and supports one through life as a priest.

As you grow in your experience of being priest, never forget that you are always at the same time a disciple among disciples, and so must live the virtues of faithful discipleship. First and foremost, as Peter wrote, let your love be constant. Be temperate and courageous. Live humbly, obediently and joyfully. And never lose that wonder and awe that was the gift of the Holy Spirit at your Confirmation. Sadly, priests can lose their sense of awe about the call they have received, and the ministry with which they have been entrusted. Rabbi Abraham Heschel, a favorite author of mine, writes that the surest way to suppress our ability "to understand the meaning of God and the importance of worship is to take things for granted." Never take for granted who you are as a person created in God's image, redeemed by Christ, and configured to him by sacred ordination.

Finally, remember always that you are a priest not for yourself, but for the glory of God and the service of God's people. To accept ordination is an act of radical submission to Christ as Lord and to the pastoral care of his people. It is as Jesus told his first disciples: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." Ponder that truth as you prostrate yourself and hear the litany of the saints chanted over you and for you. And make the prayer of Blessed Charles de Foucauld your own:

Father, I abandon myself into your hands. Do with me

what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you. I am ready for all. I accept all. Let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this, Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul. I offer it to you with all the love of my heart. For I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve and with boundless confidence for you are my Father. Amen.

May Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Church and Queen of the Clergy, protect you and keep you always in her loving embrace!