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Holy Mass with Presbyteral Ordinations

At 9.15 today, Fourth Sunday of Easter and 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, the Holy Father Francis presided in the Vatican Basilica at Holy Mass during which presbyteral ordination was conferred to ten deacons from Roman diocesan seminaries (Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, Pontifical Roman Minor Seminary, "Redemptoris Mater" Diocesan College, and Seminary of Our Lady of Divine Love), and from other colleges.

The following concelebrated with the Holy Father: Cardinal Agostino Vallini, vicar general of His Holiness for the diocese of Rome; His Excellency Msgr. Filippo Iannone, vicegerente; the auxiliary bishops; the superiors of the seminaries represented; and the ordinands' parish priests.

The homily pronounced by the Holy Father during the Eucharistic celebration was substantially the ritual homily given in the Italian edition of the Roman Pontifical for the Ordination of Presbyters, to which he added some further considerations.

Homily of the Holy Father

Dear brothers,

These our sons are now to be advanced to the Order of Priests. Let us consider carefully the nature of the ministry to which they are about to be raised. It is true that God has made His entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ. Nevertheless, our great Priest Himself, Jesus Christ, chose certain disciples to carry out publicly in His name, and on behalf of mankind, a priestly office in the Church. They were elected by the Lord Jesus not to embark on a career, but to undertake this service.

For Christ was sent by the Father, and He in turn sent the Apostles into the world, so that through them and their successors, the Bishops, to whom are given as co-workers the priests, joined to them in the priestly office, and called to the service of the people of God.

After mature deliberation, these our brothers are now to be ordained to the priesthood in the Order of the presbyterate so as to serve Christ the Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd, by whose ministry His body, that is, the

Church, is built and grows into the people of God, a holy temple of the Holy Spirit.

In being configured to Christ the eternal High Priest and joined to the priesthood of the bishops, they will be consecrated as true priests of the New Testament, to preach the Gospel, to shepherd God's people, and to celebrate the sacred Liturgy, especially the Lord's sacrifice.

Now, dear sons and brothers, you are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood. For your part you will exercise the sacred duty of teaching in the name of Christ the Teacher. Impart to everyone the word of God which you have received with joy. Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practice what you preach.

In this way, let your doctrine be nourishment for the people of God: simple, as the Lord spoke, reaching the heart. Do not give homilies that are too intellectual and elaborate: speak in a simple way, speak to hearts. And this preaching will be true nourishment. Let the holiness of your lives be a delightful fragrance to Christ's faithful, so that by word and example you may build up the house which is God's Church. The word without example of life is no use; it is better to turn back. The double life is an ugly disease in the Church.

Likewise you will exercise in Christ the office of sanctifying. For by your ministry the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful will be made perfect, being united to the sacrifice of Christ, which will be offered through your hands in an unbloody way on the altar, in union with the faithful, in the celebration of the sacraments. Understand, therefore, what you do and imitate what you celebrate. As celebrants of the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, strive to put to death whatever in your members is sinful and to walk in newness of life. A presbyter who has perhaps studied a lot of theology and has one, two, three degrees, but has not learned to bear Christ's cross, is of no use. He will be a good academic, a good professor, but not a priest.

You gather others into the people of God through Baptism. You forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church in the sacrament of Penance. Please, I ask you in the name of Christ and the Church to be merciful, always; do not load the faithful with burdens they cannot bear, and do not do so to yourselves either. Jesus rebukes the doctors of the law for this, and calls them hypocrites. You will comfort the sick with holy oil and celebrate the sacred rites. One of your tasks – perhaps boring, even painful – is going to visit the sick. Do this. Yes, it is good for the lay faithful and deacons to go, but do not neglect to touch the flesh of the suffering Christ in the sick: this sanctifies you, and brings you closer to Christ. When you offer prayers of praise and thanks to God throughout the hours of the day, not only for the people of God but for the world – remember then that you are taken from among men and appointed on their behalf for those things that pertain to God. Carry out the ministry of Christ the Priest with constant joy and genuine love, attending not to your own concerns but to those of Jesus Christ. Be joyful, never sad. Joyful. With the joy of service to Christ, even in the midst of suffering, misunderstandings, one's own sins. Keep always before your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd Who came not to be served but to serve, and Who came to seek out and save what was lost. Please, do not be "Lords", do not be "clerics of state", but shepherds, shepherds of the people of God.
