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N. 211017a

Sunday 17.10.2021

Holy Mass with Episcopal Ordinations

At 9.00 this morning, 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time, the Holy Father Francis presided at Holy Mass in the Vatican Basilica, during which he conferred episcopal ordination to Msgr. Guido Marini, bishop of Tortona, and to Msgr. Andrés Gabriel Ferrada Moreira, secretary of the Congregation for the Clergy.

The homily delivered by the Holy Father during the Eucharistic celebration is substantially the one provided in the Rite for the Ordination of Bishops, to which he however added some further considerations.

The following is the full text of the homily:

Homily of the Holy Father

Dearest brothers and sons,

Let us carefully consider the great responsibility to which these brothers of ours have been called.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father to redeem the human race, in turn sent the Twelve Apostles into the world so that, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, they might preach the Gospel to all people and unite them under one Shepherd, and that they might sanctify them and guide them to salvation.

In order to perpetuate this apostolic ministry from one generation to the next, the Twelve chose other men to share in their work. Through the laying on of hands, they passed on to them the gift of the Spirit which they themselves had received from Christ, thereby conferring the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders. Thus, through an uninterrupted succession of bishops this earliest ministry has been preserved in the living Tradition of the Church, and the work of the Saviour continues and develops to our own day. In the bishop surrounded by his priests, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, is present in your midst.

For it is Christ who, through the ministry of the bishop, continues to preach the Gospel of salvation and to sanctify believers by means of the sacraments of faith. It is Christ who, through the paternal role of the bishop, draws new members to his body which is the Church. It is Christ who, in the wisdom and prudence of the bishop, guides the People of God along their pilgrimage here on earth until at last they reach eternal bliss.

Therefore, welcome with gratitude and joy, this brother of ours whom we bishops are about to receive into the episcopal college by the laying on of hands. As for you, dearest brothers, chosen by the Lord, consider that you have been chosen from among men and for men; you have been appointed to the things pertaining to God. Indeed, episcopacy is the name of a service, not of an honour, since the bishop must strive to serve rather than to rule, according to the Master's commandment: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (*Lk 22: 26*). And by this service you will uphold your vocation and be true shepherds in serving, not in honours, in power, in might. No, to serve, always to serve.

Proclaim the Word at every opportune and inopportune occasion. Admonish, rebuke, but always with kindness; exhort unflinching in patience and teaching. And through prayer and the offer of sacrifice for your people, draw from the fullness of Christ's holiness the manifold riches of divine grace. You will be the custodians of faith, service and charity in the Church and for this you must be close. Think, closeness is the most typical sign of God. He himself says this to his people in Deuteronomy: "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us?". Closeness, with two accompanying traits: a closeness that is compassion and tenderness. Please, do not leave aside this closeness, come closer to the people, come closer to God, come closer to your brother bishops, come closer to the priests. These are the four forms of closeness of the bishop. The bishop is a man close to God in prayer. Very often one might say: "I have so much to do that I can't pray. Stop. When the apostles "invented" deacons, what does Peter say? "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word". The first task of the bishop is to pray – not like a parrot – to pray with the heart, to pray. "I don't have time". No! Take away other things, but prayer is the first task of the bishop. Closeness to God in prayer. Then, the second form of closeness, closeness to the other bishops. "No, because those belong to that party, I belong to this party...". Be bishops! There will be arguments between you, but as brothers, close to one another. Never speak badly of your brother bishops, never. Closeness to the bishops: the second form of closeness, to the episcopal body. The third form of closeness is closeness to priests. Please, do not forget that the priests are the closest of the close. Very often we hear complaints, that a priest says: "I called the bishop but the secretary told me his diary is full, that perhaps, within thirty days, he might be able to see me...". This is not good enough. If you find out that a priest has called, call him the same day or the day after. And with this, he will know he has a father. Closeness to the priests, and if they do not come to you, go to them: closeness. And the fourth form of closeness, closeness to the holy people of God. As Paul said to Timothy: "Remember your grandmother and your mother" (cf. *2 Tim 1:5*). Do not forget that you have been "taken from the flock", not as a member of an élite that has studied, that has many qualifications and who must be a bishop. No, by the flock. Please, do not forget these four forms of closeness: closeness to God in prayer, closeness to bishops in the episcopal body, closeness to priests, and closeness to the flock. May the Lord let you grow on this path of closeness, so that you will better imitate the Lord, because he has always been and is near to us, and with his closeness that is compassionate and tender he leads us forward. And may Our Lady keep you.
