



The Holy See

CONFERRAL OF EPISCOPAL ORDINATION

ON MSGR. PETER BRIAN WELLS AND ON MSGR. MIGUEL ÁNGEL AYUSO GUIXOT

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Saturday, 19 March 2016

[Multimedia]

Beloved Brothers and Sons,

It will do us good to carefully consider the great ecclesial 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. Christ who preaches, Christ who

creates the Church, who nourishes the Church, Christ who guides: this is the bishop.

Therefore, welcome with gratitude and joy these brothers of ours whom we bishops are about to receive into the episcopal college by the laying on of hands. Render to them the honour that is owed to the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God, to whom the testimony of the Gospel and the ministry of the Spirit for sanctification have been entrusted. Remember Jesus' words to the Apostles: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16).

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, therefore a 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". Be servants. Of all: of the greatest and of the least. Of all. But always be servants, serving.

Proclaim the Word at every opportune and inopportune occasion. Admonish, reproach, exhort with all magnanimity and doctrine. And, through preaching and offerings of Sacrifice for your people, draw from the fullness of the sanctity of Christ the manifold richness of divine grace. Do not forget that the bishop's first task is prayer. Peter said this on the day of the election of the seven deacons. The second task is proclaiming the Word. Then come the others, but the first is prayer. If a bishop does not pray, he will be able to do nothing.

In the Church entrusted to you, be faithful custodians and dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. As the Father has placed you at the head of his family, always follow the example of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep: behind every document, there is a person. Behind every letter that you receive, there is a person. May those people be known by you and may you be capable of knowing them.

Love with a fatherly and brotherly love all those whom God entrusts to you. First the presbyters and deacons. It makes one cry how often one hears that a priest has asked to speak with his bishop and the secretary has told him: "He has so many things to do, he will not be able to receive you for three months". The bishop's first neighbour is his presbyter, his priest, his first neighbour. If you do not love the first neighbour, you will not be capable of loving all. Close to the presbyters, to the deacons, to your collaborators in the ministry, close to the poor, the defenceless and those in need of acceptance and help. Look the faithful in the eye! Not crosswise, but in the eye, in order to see the heart. May your faithful, whether presbyter, deacon or lay person, be able to see your heart. Always look them in the eye.

Pay careful attention to those who do not belong to the one fold of Christ, because they too have been entrusted to you in the Lord. Remember that in the Catholic Church, made one by the bond

of charity, you are united to the College of Bishops and you must carry within you the solicitude of all Churches, caring generously for those who are most in need of help.

Watch lovingly over the whole flock, among whom the Holy Spirit places you in order to support the Church of God. Do this in the name of the Father, whose image you make present; in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, by whom you were constituted teachers, priests and shepherds; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and whose power sustains us in our weakness.

May the Lord accompany you, may he be near you on this path which you begin today.