

## HOMILY AT PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS

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In this Easter season we find ourselves living, together with the entire Church, the joy of the Resurrection. The power of Easter forever changed the course of history and began an unbroken chain of people – beginning with the holy women and the apostles – who would spread everywhere the good news that Jesus is alive. Added to the joy of this time, and intimately linked to it, is our joy for the priestly ordination of twenty-four deacons of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

In the first reading of today's Mass, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, we were invited to consider the years immediately after Resurrection Sunday (cf. Acts 10:37-43). For the disciples, Jesus' victory over death was an amazing confirmation of all the words they had heard from the Master during the years of his public life. Jesus was – and is – alive, thus confirming that his message was not a nice theory but a reality. The disciples, who were eyewitnesses to both his death and resurrection, came to realize that it was worth giving up their own life, being his instruments to spread the joy of the Gospel, despite the obstacles they might encounter on their path.

Saint Paul wrote that he felt like an ambassador of Christ called to spread God's desire to enter into communion with all men and women, and to repair and reconcile what was broken (cf. 2 Cor 5:14 ff). Thus we can define the vocation of the apostles in this way: to be channels through which God's life can reach everyone.

With the vocation of the apostles as our background, I now address you, dear deacons. In a few moments you will receive the laying on of hands and you will be consecrated priests, continuing the chain of sacred ministers that began in 1944, the year in which the first three priests of Opus Dei were ordained. It is a great grace, a gift, that we carry in vessels of clay. Your lives, starting today, will be marked by three great goals, which I wish to briefly recall here. I am referring to the ministry of the sacraments, the ministry of the word, and the ministry of charity.

*The ministry of the sacraments.* One of the greatest graces of this day will be to be able to make our Lord present in the Holy Mass and offer his forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance. The gift of the priesthood implies being able to pronounce the words “this is my Body,” “this is my Blood,” “I absolve you

from your sins,” with all their supernatural effectiveness. Speaking of God’s closeness to us in the sacraments, Pope Francis reminded us: “It is really important to return to the basics, to rediscover what is essential, through what we touch and see in the celebration of the Sacraments. The question of the Apostle Saint Thomas (cf. *Jn* 20:25), seeking to see and touch the nail wounds in Jesus’ body, and the desire to be able in some way to ‘touch’ God in order to believe in him. What Saint Thomas asks of the Lord is what we all need: to see him, to touch him so that we may be able to know him. The Sacraments meet this human need. The Sacraments, the Eucharistic celebration in a particular way, are signs of God’s love, the privileged ways for us to encounter him” (Catechesis on the Holy Mass, 8 November 2017).

In Saint Josemaría, dear ordinands, you have a wonderful model to imitate. His love for the Eucharist was seen especially in the effort he made to celebrate the Holy Mass with devotion, putting care into the details, seeking to pray with the words he read, always being obedient to the liturgical indications given by the Church. He also venerated and was grateful all his life for the sacrament of Penance, which he liked to call the sacrament of joy. Thus we can understand the insistence with which he reminded all priests that we should love confession, both personal confession and the hours dedicated to the confessional. Finally, he invited us, and we ask his help so that it be a reality in us, to make spreading the forgiveness and mercy of God a “dominant passion” in our life.

Together with the sacraments, you will dedicate yourselves very especially to the *ministry of the Word*. Being priests implies being messengers of the Word of God. From now on, through numerous meditations, retreats, homilies, classes, personal conversations, etc., you will have the opportunity and the privilege of being able to help many people to come to know better the life of Jesus and to deepen in the riches of our faith. Our effort involves frequently meditating on and contemplating the mysteries of Christ, being (as Saint Josemaría invited us) another character in the Gospel scenes.

Pope Francis, on the Sunday dedicated to Sacred Scripture this year, reminded us that “at the center of the life of God’s holy people and our journey of faith are not ourselves and our own words. At the center is God and his Word.” Hence he invited everyone to have an ardent love for Sacred Scripture and “to be credible heralds, prophets of God’s word in the world” (Homily, 23 January 2022).

The third aspect, which is the soul of the priesthood, is the *ministry of charity*. Your Prelate – the Father – recently reminded us of some words of Saint Josemaría, written in 1956, that strongly stress this aspect: “My priest sons, you have been ordained to serve. Let me begin by reminding you that your priestly ministry is a mission of service. Since I know you well, I am aware that this word ‘service’ expresses all

that you wish and all that you are. This good and sincere desire of yours to be forever occupied in doing good to others, just like your brothers and sisters, is for me a source of great pride and consolation, and is why I can say that you are *gaudium meum et corona mea* (Phil 4:1): my joy and my crown” (Letter, 8 August 1956, no.1).

Let us pray that these words may imbue our whole lives, and that service to all men and women may be in us a joyful reality, with full awareness that the most effective way to keep this fire enkindled is to remain – through our life of prayer – very close to Christ’s loving Heart.

Before concluding, I would like to especially greet the mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters of the new priests, and their relatives and friends. Give thanks to God for this great gift and may it help you to draw personally closer to God and renew your desire to serve him. Let us all also give thanks to God for the new priests, and let us pray that they may always be faithful and effective dispensers of God’s grace.

Let us also pray for peace, uniting ourselves to the prayer of the Pope and the whole Church, in these times of war between fraternal nations.

We entrust our petitions to our Mother Mary in a special way in this month dedicated to her.