

Priesthood Ordination Mass 2014 Saturday, June 14, 2013 Is 61:1-3; I Tim 4:12-16; Mt 9:35-38 (St. Thomas, East Lansing, 10:30 AM; Gary and Todd Koenigsknecht; William Vincent Richardson; James Rolph; Daniel Westermann)

Thanks to: Bishop Mengeling; Msgr. Bernie Reilly, Sr. Joan Meerschaert and the Cathedral staff; Fr. ? of St. John Vianney Seminary and Fr.      and Fr.      of Sacred Heart Major Seminary; and Fr. Jerry Vincke representing the North American College in Rome; Michael Andrews; Deacon Tom Fogle; Fr. John Linden and Jane Sessions; parents and family members of those to be ordained—welcome and thank you for your support of their vocations; invite all the seminarians present to stand; invite all the priests to stand.

My dear sisters and brothers, we are invited to consider carefully the nature of the order to which these our brothers are to be ordained today. God has made his entire holy people a royal priesthood. However, Jesus also chose his apostles to be his sacramental presence for building up the Body of Christ in service to all of us. Thus configured to Jesus the High Priest they will be

able to offer the Lord's sacrifice on our behalf to the Heavenly Father.

You guys are way too young! It is amazing that these five men went to college seminary together and, except for Deacon Dan who studied in Rome, then attended Sacred Heart together. They are all about 27 years old. It seems this must be the reason why you chose our second reading today, from Paul's First Letter to Timothy, where we heard: "Let no one have contempt for your youth." Timothy was certainly no St. Paul. Paul had left Timothy in charge of the Church in Ephesus and now had to write him two letters. Timothy was too shy and too self-conscious about being young. So, in essence, Paul tells Timothy to be a leader, that is, to buck up.

But the real challenge to Timothy is not just to assert himself that so that people will not look down on him. Rather, Paul wants Timothy to live in such a way and teach in such a way that no one would have cause to look down on him. That, my sons and

brothers, is the message for you. When Paul tells Timothy, “Attend to yourself and to your teaching,” he is offering the method by which you will best serve as priests. Thus, there are two aspects of Paul’s instruction which are very closely interrelated: your behavior and your teaching.

As to your behavior, that is, that behavior which will give no cause for others to look down on you, there is no model but Jesus. Jesus picked up that scroll of Isaiah at the beginning of his ministry and read it out in the synagogue. That text from Isaiah should also be your inaugural address: bring good news to the afflicted, bind up the broken, give liberty to captives, set prisoners free, comfort those who are mourning. The People of God want you to be a blessing in their lives. Use all that zeal and youthful passion to be such a blessing. Bear to all you meet the oil of gladness. Be covered always in a mantle of praise. Pope Francis has been urging us to be messengers of joy, of hope, but mostly of love.

The text you chose for our Gospel today is a bridge between the miracles of Jesus in chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew and his long speech to the apostles about becoming missionaries in chapter 10. The real heart of the gospel reading we heard proclaimed and what serves as the bridge is Jesus pointing out that the flock needs shepherds. But why does it need shepherds? Jesus tells us that the flock is harassed and torn apart. As Jesus had preached and healed so now he wants his apostles to do the same, to be a balm of Gilead where there is only strife.

Well, that is how you are to behave. Now, following Paul's directions to Timothy, you are also to teach. Just after our Gospel today, Jesus names his 12 apostles and then sends them forth. The last of the apostles named is Judas Iscariot who, we are told, handed him over. The word, handed him over (*paradidomi*), is the same word which we use for tradition, the handing over to others of the Good News. This, my sons and brothers, sets the stage for your teaching.

First of all, it is always a handing over of Jesus. The Sanhedrin handed Jesus over to Pilate (Mk 15:1, 11) and then Pilate handed Jesus over to the people (Lk 23:25) and to the soldiers (Mk 15:15). This is not the kind of handing on of Jesus that we want to see from you five, this neutral or even traitorous handing on.

Rather, again it is Jesus who models this for us. He handed over his body to us at the Last Supper and he hands on his spirit at his death on the cross (Jn 19:30). Thus it is that whatever we hand on is first handed on to us. We do not take it of our own. So you, my sons and brothers, are always in the receiving mode. Stay in touch with Jesus so that you are always receiving from him what you are to hand on. Of course, this is symbolized so well, as Paul says, by remembering the gift you receive at the laying on of hands. Attend to that gift often. Just prior to our reading from the Letter to Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy to be rooted in tradition (4:6) and in piety (4:7). Your piety will remind you that all is a gift

of Jesus, that nothing you are to say is your own, but what the Spirit of Jesus gives you to say. And it has been handed on to you, at great cost. Hand it on to others, also at great cost to yourself.

Finally, let us together then keep always before our eyes that Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and who came to seek out and save what was lost. That is what was handed on to me, what I hand on to you, and what you will hand on to others, by your teaching and by your lives. Allow me then to serve you and to wash your feet.

God bless you all.