

Be Pastors not Functionaries, Pope says to new priests



Pope Francis conferred priestly ordination upon ten deacons from several Roman diocesan seminaries: the Major Seminary, the Seminary of the Oblates, the sanctuary of the Virgin of Divine Love, and the Redemptoris Mater Seminary. Concelebrating with the Holy Father were Cardinal Agostino Vallini, vicar general of His Holiness for Rome, Archbishop Filippo Iannone, O. Carm., vice gerent of the diocese of Rome, auxiliary bishops, and the superiors of the seminaries from which the new priests came.

The homily delivered by the Bishop of Rome was based on the one that appears in the Pontificale Romanum for the ordination of priests, with one or two personal additions, mainly emphasizing the mercy that must characterize the new priests. Following are ample extracts from his homily.

“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. 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, he might continue to exercise his office of Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd. Indeed, priests are established co-workers of the Order of Bishops, with whom they are joined in the priestly office and with whom they are called to the service of the people of God.”

“Now ... 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. Remember your mothers, your grandmothers, your catechists, who gave you the Word of God, the faith ... the gift of faith! ... Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practise what you teach. Remember too that the Word of God is not your property: it is the Word of God. And the Church is the custodian of the Word of God.”

“You will exercise in Christ the office of sanctifying. ... You will gather others into the people of God through Baptism, and you will forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church in the sacrament of Penance. Today I ask you in the name of Christ and the Church, never tire of being merciful. You will comfort the sick and the elderly with holy oil: do not hesitate to show tenderness towards the elderly.”

“Remember then that you are taken from among men and appointed on their behalf for those things that pertain to God. Therefore, 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. You are pastors, not functionaries. Be mediators, not intermediaries.”

“Finally, dear sons, exercising for your part the office of Christ, Head and Shepherd, while united with the Bishop and subject to him, strive to bring the faithful together into one family, so that you may lead them to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. 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.”

V.I.S.