

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Annunciation of the Lord
Episcopal Ordinations of Bishops Muhm and Coffey
March 25, 2019



Your Eminences, Monseigneur le Nonce Apostolique,
Your Excellencies , Reverend Monsignors and Fathers,
Distinguished Flag and General Officers,
Servants in the Sacred Diaconate,
Esteemed Chaplains,
Consecrated Women and Men,
Beloved Members of the Muhm and Coffey Families,
Sisters and Brothers all in Christ, the Risen One,
Dear Bill and Joe,

Today the universal Church celebrates in one Solemnity the Annunciation and the Incarnation, honoring the Word who makes Himself Son of the Virgin and the Virgin who is transformed by her yes into the Mother of God.¹ It is a great grace that, responding to Archbishop Pierre's desire, your ordination to episcopal office takes place this day, the celebration of Jesus' and Mary's complete submission to the divine will. They will be the model of your service as an auxiliary bishop in a global reality. Capsus and Arsacal also teach us this afternoon as we consider the office and ministry of a bishop today.

The first prophet Isaiah urges King Ahaz to place his trust completely in the fidelity of Almighty God. Men in power frequently hesitate to trust anyone. This biblical king is unwilling, because he trusts more in his political machinations. He places more trust in himself than in God.

¹ Cf. *Marialis cultus*, 6.

The contrast with the Blessed Virgin, that humble girl of Nazareth, could not be more striking. Think about the amazing change to her existence. Think about the changes that came to her plans. What does she tell Joseph? What will Joachim and Ann think?

However, she brings none of these concerns to her dialogue with Gabriel. Simply she states the obvious, that she is a virgin and then the words that have become a model of fidelity forever after: "be it done to me according to thy word". She makes no conditions, but opens herself completely to the will of God. Her fiat is the prayer of the faithful person in the face of the divine will. She opens herself to an unexpected role, to place her trust entirely in the Father. So also the Lord Jesus in a different degree accepts the Father's will. Much later we will hear Mary's Son commit His Spirit into the Father's hands. He consummates the unique sacrifice that gives eternal life and allows us to be present this afternoon in that one complete offering on the Cross.

Indeed the Psalm response and the passage from Hebrews both concentrate on the perfect obedience of the Servant. My thanks go to the two about to be ordained who patterned their own fiat to this new request of the Church on the fidelity of the Lord Jesus and His Mother. You have both agreed to exchange your Navy colors for the purple of universal ministry. Our best plans can be so easily changed. I know.

Exactly eighteen years ago last week St. John Paul II put this ring on my finger to number me among the successors of the Apostles. He had been slightly late in beginning the ceremony and I was extremely nervous. I would have been more so had I known that the link to Amiternum, my titular see, would be brief and where my second assignment was to be! Divine Providence has allowed me to transmit to you what I received from a saint. Be consoled in knowing that despite the fragility of the instrument of transmission, you have several saints in your episcopal lineage.

They will help you assume the new role that is yours. You are ordained under the magnificent Trinity Dome which recalls the heavenly hosts, all about to be invoked in the Litany of Saints. Episcopal ministry in this global archdiocese is not easy. Travel dominates the weeks. Bureaucracy muddies the relationship between bishop and priest. Many masters compete for attention. Through it all, you must imitate the Blessed Virgin by keeping your eyes on the truly important One and His commission to you to preach the Gospel to the men, women, and children entrusted to our care.

In the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis tells us: "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization."² There also we experience the joy of selfless proclamation of the Kingdom of God. That empowers us to pack and unpack, to listen, and to be authentic missionary disciples.

You and I believe that we have a fundamental irreplaceable gift to offer to our Nation and to the People of God. Enshrined in the Constitution is the freedom of Religion and this

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 8.

archdiocese was erected so that it might sustain that freedom for Catholics in the military. We thank them for their giving, by giving of ourselves. We recognize their service by assuring adequate pastoral care in the medical centers of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Pope Benedict XVI, a truly great theologian, defined the ministry of a bishop in terms of the original Greek "episcopos" that contains the verb "to see". [It] "means watching over, from above seeing from the lofty position of God. Seeing from God's perspective is seeing with love that wants to serve the other, wants to help him to become truly himself. Christ is the 'Bishop of souls', ..This means: he sees us from the perspective of God. In seeing from God's viewpoint, one has an overall vision, one sees the dangers as well as the hopes and possibilities. From God's perspective one sees the essential, one sees the inner man. If Christ is the Bishop of souls, the objective is to prevent the human soul from becoming impoverished and to ensure that the human being does not lose his essence, the capacity for truth and love; ...It means starting from Christ in order to be available to human beings so that they find life.

No one can deny that you begin this ministry in a very challenging time when the past sins of some bishops and other clergy have been widely publicized. Many good people have been deeply wounded and all have experienced a sense of betrayal. Today is not an invitation to corruption and error, but a charge to heal, to lead, and to energize the noble men and women entrusted to our pastoral care with your zeal, your enthusiasm, and your joy. I have watched you interact and minister to our people. You know what you are doing. Continue and also teach our brothers to do likewise.

Shortly, I will place a ring on your finger to symbolize your marriage to Capsus and Arsacal. They represent, of course, your continued commitment to the Archdiocese for the Military Services of the United States of America. However, do not miss the significance of the Church's desire to keep the memory of once thriving Churches alive. Those two Roman settlements in North Africa are now empty. There is no Christian presence. The implicit message is that we must ensure that our thriving centers of faith do not become like them: strange names in the dustbin of history where Christ is almost unknown.

I will entrust you with the Book of the Gospels to remind you to teach that Word in and out of season. Lean on the crosier you are about to receive, but also use it to snare the lost sheep. Cultivate communion with them. As St. John Paul II reminded us: "The more intense communion is, the more mission is fostered, especially when it is lived out in the poverty of love, which is the ability to go forth to meet any person or group or culture with the power of the Cross, our spes unica and the supreme witness to the love of God, which is also manifested as a universal love of our brothers and sisters."³

Part of the exhortation proposed for the ordination of a bishop is especially useful to our ministry: "Never relax your concern for those who are not yet gathered into the one fold of Christ; they too are entrusted to you in the Lord." Teach them that the Lord of life is risen for them, as well.

³ St. John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 22.

Allow the miter to remind you of the third dimension of your new ministry: to sanctify. Help our secular world rediscover a sense of the sacred. In our interdenominational spaces—generally so nondescript and unmemorable—teach about the uniqueness of the gifts you bring. Faithful to the apostolic mandate, allow the fragrance of Sacred Chrism soon to be poured on your heads to be a reminder of the charge to fill every space with the fragrance of the Christ.

While there is much more to be said, it is sufficient to look to the Mother of God in this her national shrine. She teaches us true serenity and inner peace even in the face of a mission. Join your voice to hers in saying “Your will be done.”