

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.  
Ordination to the Priesthood  
Joseph F. Vieira, III  
(Num. 11:11b-12, 14-17, 24-5a; 2Cor. 4:1-2; 5-7; Lk. 12:49-53)



“Present” or “adsum” in an earlier time! What a simple way to respond to the Lord’s call! Yet, throughout the history of the relationship between Almighty God and humanity, so many outstanding figures have made known their willingness and openness to the divine will in just such a way.

Indeed we are gathered here because Joseph has said a resounding “yes” to the Lord’s call and the Church has ratified his response. Today we celebrate an amazing action by the Holy Spirit that will change Joseph Vieira once and for all and set him apart for the mission given him by Jesus Christ. We expect him to ignite a blaze of new evangelization as he is ordained in the Year of Faith. He recognizes his unworthiness as do we all when it comes to the Lord’s call. He gives the grace to respond and ignite.

The Book of Numbers reminds us that already in the covenant between Almighty God and the Chosen People, ministry was shared and the spirit of God was given to the elders so that the burden on Moses would not be too great. That extension of ministry reaches its climax when Jesus, the night before He offered Himself once and for all in reparation for our sins, entrusted the ordained ministry to His chosen band, the Apostles.

They have passed that ministry down through time until through the imposition of hands, Blessed John Paul II shared that Spirit with this unworthy servant. That ordination makes this one possible as I give to you the order of the presbyterate.

So, Joseph my Son, you have responded and will continue to respond to the sublime imitation of the Risen Lord who calls you to act in His Name. Your generosity will lead you to new and wonderful experiences of the Lord’s will, talents you never imagined you had, and the tremendous grace of acting in persona Christi. It is indeed an experience of wonder, because God has chosen you and, through His Church, empowers you to serve others. Indeed it will be your privilege to be Jesus Christ for men and women hungering for His saving touch and a participation in His life of grace.

The Council reminded us that when you baptize, it is Christ who baptizes, when you absolve, it is Christ who forgives sin, when you anoint the sick, it is Christ who heals and comforts the infirm, and finally when you consecrate the bread and wine, it is Christ who becomes present to nourish us with His Body and Blood. In these moments of grace you

will always speak in the first person singular. I absolve; this is My Body. Those are great moments, the highlights of a committed ministry.

You will be empowered to nourish the community of faith with the most precious gift she has to offer, the Body and Blood of Christ. No one else can give it and so your contribution will be priceless. For the Army, the greatness of that gift is so appreciated, because it is in short supply. Every Catholic who has been deployed knows the value of what you and your brother priests alone can give. You will, to quote Karl Rahner, “lift the chalice with the blood that was redeemed and sanctified in the truth.”<sup>1</sup>

You will leave this chapel this afternoon a new person: changed and empowered to be *alter Christus* to your sisters and brothers. You bring a special dimension, as well, because you already share in another sacrament of commitment which makes you and your wife an image of the love of Christ for His Church. Your mutual and exclusive love has been so powerful as to generate new life.

Pope Benedict XVI referred to the inner harmony of the two sacraments and noted that it is not an easy living, as Christian life in general and the celibate priestly life are not easy either. He was addressing the situation of the clergy of the Eastern Rites in their historic home lands, but his words of encouragement can easily be applied to Joseph, Cynthia, and their daughters. “Radiate that holiness to which all the baptized are called and build up the civilization of evangelical love and unity.”<sup>2</sup> Your domestic Church will now be front and center for many in the communities you will serve.

It is indeed Jesus Christ that you will continue to preach. That is not a simple task. First of all you preach by example. The Servant of God Pope Paul VI perceptively observed that no one listens readily to teachers, but if a teacher is also a witness, then indeed he or she will be an effective teacher. Continue to be an effective witness and teacher so that Jesus Christ may be known, loved, and followed.

Your ministry will accompany our contemporaries on the pilgrimage to eternal life. Yet do the men and women of today really look for eternal life? Has not the here and now so totally captured the attention and the longing of most people?

It is not, therefore, so easy in our contemporary world. Your adsum this afternoon means that you will continue to respond as the concrete dimensions of your ministry take shape amid joys and challenges. Yours is a tireless service to the truth. Never has communication been so simple or information so abundant. Yet the identification of truth and the ability to proclaim it have seldom been such an arduous task. Information is so easily manipulated by the mass media, in politics, in commerce, and even sometimes in academic settings. The military has its own strictures. The dictatorship of relativism has yet to experience a coup. Your mission is clear and you can depend on the Lord Jesus, the only Master to whom you must give a definitive accounting.

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl Rahner, *Prayers for a Lifetime*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, nos. 48 and 45.

Faith is also a sword and can require conflict for love of truth and charity (cf. Mt. 10:34). "A plan for ecclesial unity in which a priori conflicts are eliminated as simply polarizations and internal peace is obtained at the price of renouncing the totality of the witness, quickly reveals itself as illusory."<sup>3</sup>

Whenever I hear the Gospel passage just proclaimed, I am reminded of a classmate who had Jesus' wish to set the earth on fire engraved in the original Greek on his chalice. It is a daily reminder as he celebrates Mass what his mission is.

Joseph, you must set us on fire with the love of Christ so that we can preach His Gospel with the witness of our lives! There can be no new evangelization if it does not begin with each one of us. You must help your sisters and brothers reach that conclusion. You must inspire them to take the responsibility of imbuing their lives and decisions with Christ. Otherwise this unique sacrifice in which we are privileged to participate remains in the chapel, lame, and without all of its potential.

When you send them out from Mass, make certain that they know that they leave with a mission. They are sent to bring Christ to the barracks, the marketplace, the office, the gym, the BX, and the home. You are ordained on Saturday, a day traditionally dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Take her *fiat* as the paradigm for your response and what you suggest to others.

Each day as you draw nearer to the Lord, who has called you, you will attract others to His saving presence. Priestly ministry is based totally on Jesus Christ. "...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...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; to ensure that he becomes acquainted with God; that he does not get lost in blind alleys; that he does not end in loneliness but remains altogether open. .. It means thinking, seeing and acting from his exalted vantage point. It means starting from Christ in order to be available to human beings so that they find life."<sup>4</sup>

Those sentiments borrowed again from the Pope emeritus describe well why we are here. Your many years of chaplaincy certainly buttress this new page of ministry begun today. I thank all of those who in your past have prepared you for this moment and those who facilitated this transition to Catholic priesthood in the service of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. The Archdiocese for the Military Services is deeply

---

<sup>3</sup> Citation of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, homily 29.VI.09.

grateful to Msgr. Steenson for his willingness to allow you to continue as an Army Chaplain.

With me you will have a special bond. You are the only priest I have ordained thus far to whom I give faculties immediately and who will continue to serve in the Archdiocese entrusted to my pastoral care.

Allow me to assure you that boredom will not be one of your challenges!

“Present” for the Lord’s will and a lifetime of serene service to buildup His Kingdom is your response today. This community prays for you and with you so that affirmative may always be your response.