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Ordination of Permanent Deacons
Feast of St. Bartholomew, 24 August 2013



Here is an Israelite in whom there is no duplicity. So the Lord Jesus describes Bartholomew, the Apostle whose feast is celebrated by the Church today. Duplicity is a good watchword for us on this special day. Duplicity as defined by Webster is hypocritical cunning or deception; double-dealing.¹ It is certainly the opposite of the forthrightness praised by the Lord Jesus in the Gospel.

What is the relationship between truth and what Almighty God does this morning?

Joseph and Roy, today in this magnificent setting you are being ordained as ministers of truth and charity and you will be sent forth to return to Korea to be special agents not of the CIA, but of the new evangelization.

Let no one be misled by what we heard in the first reading. The Apostles were troubled by dissension in the primitive community. The Greek-speaking widows felt neglected in the daily distribution of food and the Apostles, all Jews, were concerned as to the response and the provisions to be made.

They did not establish a committee or deny the widows' allegations or call an assembly. They prayed and listened to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Then seven men were designated—all with Greek names to serve the community. It is not good for us to neglect the word so as to wait on table, St. Luke tells us in the Acts of the Apostles.

So today we invoke the Holy Spirit and beg Almighty God to change our brothers Roy and Joseph into servants. Like the first deacons they will minister in a multicultural environment. Korea is a temporary home to thousands of US troops and many families. It is the patria, the homeland of some 50 million Koreans.

Under my direction you will serve the faithful of this global Archdiocese and under the guidance and pleasure of my Korean brother bishops, you will also contribute to the health and welfare of that thriving young Church.

Service, ministry is your task, but what is it? Often it will be concretely defined by the Church, her hierarchy and her faithful. Always, it will be service to the truth. There you must always imitate Bartholomew: be without guile. Swim against the current. Pope Francis says that it is good for the blood flow. It is, for the blood flow of the Church and the way that leads to eternal life.

¹ Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 434.

Our world thrives on speedy communication, the sound bite, the conclusion based on half-facts or what attracts attention, and, sadly, the message dictated by profit. May that never be your motivation! Shortly I will hand you the Book of the Gospels and tell you to be the herald of that good news. I will urge you to preach what you believe and live what you preach.

Like St. Francis of Assisi, I encourage you to preach the Gospel always and when necessary, use words!

Be consumed by the desire to keep alive and forceful the message of the Lord Jesus. It is not a dead letter. It is alive and active in our midst. It provokes us. It tells us what we may not want to hear. It challenges our conclusions and requires us to shed hypocrisy. It is a liberating message which compels action. It is the daily bread of the Church and you will be its ordained servants.

Your witness to charity will transform the Church. Shortly, I will beg God so that "every Gospel virtue might abound in you: unfeigned love, concern for the sick and poor, unassuming authority, the purity of innocence, and the observance of spiritual discipline."

It is a tall order, but divine grace makes everything possible. As St. John Chrysostom reminds us in the Office of Readings today: "How could twelve uneducated men who lived on lakes and rivers and wastelands, get the idea for such an immense enterprise?" Take to heart the teaching of Pope Benedict's first encyclical on charity. By your example help others to fix their gaze on everlasting life. You can do that with your good example as ministers, husbands, and fathers. Never has the invitation to look forward to everlasting life been more important than now. Too often our world measures everything by gain, by the false gods of money and pleasure, or by the elusive deception of power. Somehow we must re-capture the sovereign tranquility of Christ before Pilate and help all people appreciate the priceless value of eternal life.

Your charity must be all encompassing. Service to the poor is important and essential. You already know that from your commitment to the Knights of Columbus. The poor cannot be measured merely in economic terms. Anyone who has not embraced the fullness of the Gospel is poor. So today there is an entire crypt church full of the poor. We all have room for growth.

Charity is that service to the truth with which I began. Speak and witness to the truth about the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. Speak and witness to the truth about the uniqueness of marriage as the life-long union between one man and one woman. Tell young people the truth about chastity. The basic lessons of the Ten Commandments are as valid today as they were thousands of years ago on Mount Sinai.

Yes, you will also solemnly baptize, can witness marriages, serve as an ordinary minister of Holy Communion, bury the dead in the name of the Church, gather the faithful for a Sunday service in the absence of a priest, preach during the liturgy, and make holy objects of piety or personal use. I do not wish to minimize the importance of these realizations of the ministry which Almighty God is about to give you through His Church.

However, it is so important to recall and reverence the originality of diaconal ministry in the Church: charity. The Spirit inspired the Apostles to raise up servants of charity. That charity also opens you to what the Church will ask of you. She will define your ministry. She will send you forth.

Finally, I wanted to ordain you on the Feast of an Apostle, because you are being sent forth in the context of this Year of Faith. Your ordination and incardination represent an experiment in the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA. You will make an important contribution to the life of the faithful of this Archdiocese in Korea, but none of us knows how everything will work out. None of us is certain about the dimensions of your future service. None of us is certain if you will also be the only deacons ordained directly to serve the AMS.

I imagine that the Apostles did not know that most of those first deacons would die martyrs. You will certainly be martyrs in the sense of witnesses, but the specifics of the development of your ministry remain in the mind of God.

Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote well about obedience when he made the following comment: "This obedience is not always easy. As a result of that mysterious original sin, committed at the prompting of Satan, the one who is 'a liar and the father of lies' (*Jn* 8:44), man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it towards idols (cf. *1 Thes* 1:9), exchanging 'the truth about God for a lie' (*Rom* 1:25). Man's capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and his will to submit to it is weakened. Thus, giving himself over to relativism and scepticism (cf. *Jn* 18:38), he goes off in search of an illusory freedom apart from truth itself."²

We honor Bartholomew today as an Apostle, one sent. We are reminded that Jesus the Lord chose His Apostles for the mission they were to accomplish. God Himself chooses and gives the necessary strength. He fills up what is lacking in us, because of our human weakness and places the words of salvation in our mouths. Thus, the one who hears the divine call and opens himself to the grace offered, will have gold in his mouth, the very word of God. However, it is not always easy to listen to this voice. We are so easily distracted. The world attracts us with another message and different values and plays with our weaknesses.

So today we promise our prayers to Joseph and Roy so that they know how to give good, faithful service and remain faithful to their commitments. At the same time this morning is a lesson for us. These men are signing a blank check and accept to serve where they are sent. It is almost closer to the life of a missionary than that of the diocesan clergy to which they are ordained.

Charity, Word, and sacrament define the ministry you will assume. I am pleased to call you and to give you faculties, and to send you forth. You are needed. Be like Bartholomew without duplicity. Speak the message of truth clearly. Be servants of charity. Make Christ known wherever you can!

² Blessed John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 1.