

Ordination of Rev. John Paul Evans – St. Peter’s Cathedral, 4th July 2015

(Jeremiah 1:4-9; Rom. 12:4-8; John 15:9-17)



John Paul, you wish the liturgy of your ordination to the priesthood to be set in the context of those three readings from Holy Scripture to which we have just listened. They clearly speak to you as you now offer yourself to the Church for priestly service.

The young Jeremiah was awestruck and overwhelmed when the Lord God called him to be a prophet. He protested that he was not fit for the mission God had in mind for him. Yet this was the role laid out for him even before he was born. In the mystery of God’s inscrutable and eternal design Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet. You also, John Paul, have been chosen and have been set apart by God to minister to Christ’s people as a priest. Nor are you assuming this office of your own accord, but are being called by God. (Heb. 5:4) Always remember that Christ has chosen you to be his priest, and in choosing you will always be with you, at your side. What the Lord said to Jeremiah, is also intended for you, *‘Be not afraid....for I am with you.’*

John Paul, as the apostle Paul has just reminded us, you have received your own particular gift of grace within the Body of Christ. The charism that is priesthood is conferred on you, not as a personal keepsake, as it were, but is given by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of all the members of Christ’s Church. In the course of your life as a priest you will be a channel of Christ’s grace to many people, as you bring them his words of healing and place before them the Eucharistic bread of life. The Church awaits your ministry; the diocese of Lancaster greatly needs your priestly presence and will treasure it. Strive to be a worthy ambassador for Christ and a bearer of his saving truth to the world, and in moments of doubt and challenge, be of good heart for Christ has overcome the world. (See John 16:33)

In the gospel we have listened to the parting words of Christ to his disciples; they are to love one another as he has loved them. That love is to be a practical love, rooted in his own example of giving up his life for his friends. Peter was asked three times by the Lord did he love him, and when he responded yes on each occasion he was told: feed my lambs and feed my sheep. (John 21: 15-17) As a priest, John Paul, you will express your love for Christ, like Peter, by feeding his people in Word and in Sacrament. Christ also speaks in that same gospel passage of revealing or disclosing to his disciples what he himself has heard from the Father. Our people more than ever need to hear those words of Christ which he has heard from his Father. In this regard, they will look eagerly and expectantly to you as a priest of God for the word of life.

John Paul, as your Bishop, I leave with you the words of the 'servant of the Lord' in Isaiah, and pray that they will be true for you as a priest. *The Lord God has given me a disciple's tongue, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens my ear to hear, as those who are taught.* (Isaiah 50:4). Amen!

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