



The Holy See

PRIESTLY ORDINATION

HOMILY OF PAUL VI

Wednesday, 25. January 1967

«Haec dies, quam fecit Dominus»

This is the day which the Lord has made.

What day is this?

Let us say, first of all, what kind of day it is for Us, the Successor of Saint Peter and «Episcopus Ecclesiae Catholicae» (Bishop of the Universal Church): it is a day of grace and of joy, one of the most blessed days of Our life, a day which We shall constantly remember, with gratitude to the Lord and with affection for you.

Always, for a Bishop, the day of Ordination is a happy moment because of the exercise of the fulness of his Priesthood; because of the addition of new ministers to the hierarchical order, as his dearest sons, his closest brothers, his most faithful collaborators; and because of the edification of Holy Mother Church, who is thus endowed with new ministers, new shepherds.

But today's Ordination is distinguished by special circumstances: these new Priests have been chosen among a people who, in the course of history, have been, to us Romans, a cause of special drama: «Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos» (Virgil: *Eclogue* I, 67): divided from us by half a world; but then, under the auspices of Saint Gregory and Saint Augustine, most dear and close to us; later, with immense pain, torn asunder from us; finally, in recent times marked by new friendship, and new hope, that people strongly and sweetly draws to itself our very heart.

And now, behold! You come, bringing this new friendship and pledging this new hope, to reconfirm our Christian and Catholic communion with your people - and shall our heart not overflow with joy

and emotion? You come, enriched with an experience of life which makes your offering all the more significant and precious - and shall we not attentively seek in your vocations the signs of that Holy Spirit Who renews the face of the earth?

For you, also, venerable and beloved sons, this is a great day, as you are well aware. We do not need to repeat, here and now, those things upon which you have meditated during the years of preparation for this decisive hour. You are becoming Priests of Christ; upon your souls there is stamped the mysterious character which assimilates you to Our Lord. He communicates to you some of His extraordinary and awesome powers, such as those of offering validly the Eucharistic Sacrifice, of acting as ministers and teachers of the faithful people; He binds you as obedient and active cooperators to the Hierarchy of the Church; He pledges you to an imitation of Christ which may demand all of your life, and consume everything in it; but, at the same time, He also gives you His grace, His strength, His joy and His peace.

Doubtless, you will never forget this day; and We form the prayerful wish that the memory of this day may ever be for you an interior source of spiritual light and riches. May the recollection of this ceremony, on the anniversary of the first announcement of the Vatican Council, and in this venerable Sistine Chapel which was host to Our historic meeting with the highest Representative of the Anglican Communion, inspire you to closer relations and warmer friendship with your fellow countrymen of differing beliefs, but united in Christian good will.

And to your parents, your families and friends, what does this day signify? Some of them are here present, and We greet them with great respect and cordial welcome. To all of them, near and far, this Ordination represents a sharing. They share, first, in your sacrifice of your lives to the service of God; and they willingly give up your presence, your assistance, your undivided affection, so that you may dedicate yourselves completely to the Priesthood and its duties. But, second, they also share in your merit for this sacrifice, and participate in the graces which you call down upon all the Christian people, but most richly upon your loved ones, by your mediation between God and man. Finally, they share today in your meditation upon the divine plan, by which God has called you to His full service; and in the deep feelings which fill your hearts at the reflection that His choice, among all the human race, has actually fallen upon you.

We thank your parents and families for giving you, so unselfishly and generously, to the Holy Church, and We invoke upon them the richest reward of heavenly favours that your priestly intercession can obtain, for their consolation and salvation.

On this feast, at this Ordination performed by the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, We turn confidently to Saints Peter and Paul, that they may intercede for these new Priests and secure every blessing upon their service to the people of God. We pray also to the Saints of England, Scotland and Wales, particularly to Saint Bede the Venerable, heavenly patron of your College. Above all, We claim the loving assistance of the Mother of God for these new shepherds from that

land so long and affectionately known as «Mary's Dowry».

Surrounded and upheld by this heavenly intercession, We call down upon you, beloved sons, upon your families and loved ones here and at home, the love, protection and guidance of the Eternal Priest; and to all We impart from Our heart, Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.

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