



Homily of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran-Marino At The Ordination
Of Archbishop Joseph S. Marino, Cathedral of Saint Paul, March 29, 2008

Four years ago I was among you in the nice church of Our Lady of the Valley as the guest preacher for the celebration of the priestly jubilee of our friend, Joseph Marino.

Today I am in this cathedral because by God's providence and the will of the Holy Father, Monsignor Marino has been appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Bangladesh. It will be a demanding mission for which he has been prepared. Joseph served as Secretary and Counselor in the Nunciatures to the Philippines, to Uruguay, to Nigeria, as well as to Great Britain. He has been for many years my also collaborator at the Secretariat of State in the Second Section for Relation with States, that is to say the ministry of foreign relations of the Holy See. This is why next to me is Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the permanent observer to the United Nations, who was at that time the under-secretary of the same Section for Relations with States.

As Joseph is becoming older, and we hope wiser, a higher responsibility has been entrusted to him. We thank God for that because we know that he will continue to be a faithful servant of the Church, in word and deed, in order to enlighten the road of men and women of our times with the light of the Gospel.

My dear Joseph, you know what kind of life is awaiting you. You know that it will not be an easy life. This is why we are going to invoke the Holy Spirit on you in order that He fill you with his seven gifts to enable you to transmit faithfully the Word of God and to celebrate the Sacraments left us by Christ, making of the Church a family which gathers men and women regardless of their social status or their culture. After receiving the Episcopal consecration you will be fully equipped to take your place in the succession of the Apostles to whom Christ said: "Go out and announce the Good News to all men and women." Like all bishops in the past, you are going to teach, to sanctify and to govern the people of God in deep communion with other bishops and united with the Bishop of Rome.

It is important, dear Joseph, that you be aware that you are not a generous volunteer who has proposed himself to serve, but rather an envoy: sent by the one, true shepherd of the Church, Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord. He is the One who sends you in the service of the Church and of the world. This call and mission will be signified by three liturgical rites that I wish to comment on: the laying on of hands, the spiritual anointing, and the transmission of the Gospel.

The imposition of hands: Traditionally in the Bible, it is the sign of a gift received and handed on. The list of the bishops, who before you have received their apostolic ministry and the corresponding grace to be worthy of it is a long one. It goes back to the time of the Apostles. The presence of many bishops, particularly the three consecrators, among whom is the dear Bishop Houck, who guided you towards the priesthood and ordained you a priest, testifies to the

continuity and the fidelity of the Episcopal ministry thanks to which the Church throughout history has remained the place of encounter with God, a place of forgiveness, a place of gratuitous love.

When I shall lay my hands on you, the Holy Spirit will take possession of you. This is the same Holy Spirit who was bestowed upon the Apostles. I can only repeat what Paul wrote to Timothy: “The Spirit God has been given us is not a cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise.” The Holy Spirit that we are going to welcome in this assembly today will remind each one of us of the active presence of the Risen Christ and that, as ordained ministers, we can never take the place of Jesus. He is Lord of the Church. The Church is not ours. The Church is His Church. We are no substitute for Him.

Then I shall pour on you the Holy Oil, sign of your consecration to the service of the Gospel. Because you have received the Spirit of God, “the strength which comes from God” your only desire must be to love, to serve and to live like Jesus did. As a bishop, you are called “to the Holy Life,” and so the promise of Jesus will be realized: “you are going to receive a power, ‘the power of the Holy Spirit,’ who will come on you” as we read in Acts of the Apostles (1:8). In the solemn Prayer of Ordination, the Church will intercede for you in this way: “May the (new bishop) please you by his meekness and purity of heart, presenting a fragrant offering to you.” To become a bishop, the shepherd of the flock, means that the chosen one is ready to imitate Jesus who has come not to be served but to serve and without reservation: “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

And finally I will put on your shoulders the opened book of the Gospel and I shall tell you: “Receive the Gospel and preach the Word of God.” To receive and to share: these are the two inseparable aspects of the mission of a bishop. We are not the owners of the Gospel. We receive it from the One who has overcome death, and who is today, like yesterday, the good news for the entire world. And we receive this Gospel, this good news, in the church and from the Church. More than anyone else the bishop must make the Gospel his daily nourishment, with all the other bishops, in communion with the successor of Peter. A bishop must be vigilant in interpreting it in an authentic manner, according to the words of the Constitution on Revelation of the II Vatican Council which underlines that the bishop is “not above the Word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on.” (10)

My dear brothers and sisters, our friend Joseph Marino will not exercise his episcopal ministry in a diocese but rather he will have a field of action within a great nation, Bangladesh, where he will carry on the mission of being the papal representative. That means that he will have to maintain, on behalf of the Holy Father, close contact with the local Church in order to strengthen the links of spiritual communion with the Apostolic See, as well as to build up the dialogue with political leaders in order to contribute to the positive relations between believers and society.

Bangladesh is a vast country with a population of around 150,500,000 people with only about 312,000 Catholics, spread over six dioceses. The new apostolic nuncio will have to continue the work of his predecessors, encouraging the small Catholic community:

- to witness without fear to their own faith;
- to contribute to the material and spiritual progress of the entire population;
- to dialogue with the followers of the other religions, particularly with the Muslims and the Hindus.

All this, claiming only the right to religious freedom, that is to live and announce the Gospel of Jesus, a Gospel of joy, a Gospel of hope for the whole society as we have heard proclaimed a moment ago. Let us never forget the appeal made by Pope John Paul II when he visited

Bangladesh on November 19, 1986: “I wish that the citizens of this country do not cease to work until the values of justice, mercy and of love prevail.”

My dear Joseph, don't be afraid in front of so many challenges. You will not be left alone. The Holy Spirit will be your companion. The Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, will intercede for you. The examples of the saints we are going to invoke in the litany will be your models. The missionaries, living and dead, will be supporting you. And all of us, too, will be always with you. Some days ago we celebrated Easter and the resurrection of Christ has renewed and reinforced our hope, our joy, our courage to profess our faith before men and women of our times. When you believe in the God of Jesus Christ:

- You are compelled to love your neighbor because every man and woman has been created in the Image of God.
- You respect and you serve your companions in humanity because God wants that the people of the earth form one family;
- You work knowing that we are only the administrators of this earth and of its richness which need to be preserved and shared equitably;
- You know that the meaning of life, of history and even of our death is to see God.

Here is the “rich deposit of faith” that we have to guard “with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.”

I think that the grace of our times is that we are all confronted by the essential questions; we cannot lose ourselves in secondary issues. Perhaps better today than yesterday, we understand that without the light of Christian revelation, we are heading down a blind alley. Let us reflect a little bit:

- What will become of the family if it doesn't find again its truth in Christ?
- What will science and technology produce if they are not guided by the transcendence of the human person called to the encounter with God?
- What kind of society are we constructing if human relations and the organization of society are not inspired by the respect and the service to our neighbor?
- What is the meaning of suffering, of death if they are not enlightened by the resurrection of Christ?

So often we Christians must defend man against himself because he is a prisoner of his own egoism, his spirit of domination, his own aggressivity. And we are the ones who have the key which gives access to the true meaning of human reality: the Risen Christ. “They were astonished by the assurance of Peter and John, considering that they were uneducated lay men.” Yes, whatever the limitations and the imperfections of the servants of the Church are, the Church will continue to be, “a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.” (*Lumen Gentium 1*) And until the end of the world there will always be men and women who in spite of persecution will continue to say “we cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard” because they receive the strength and the light from Christ.

Let us remember what Pope Benedict said in his first homily in the first Mass of his pontificate: “Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ -- and you will find true life.” (Homily April 24, 2005).

So, dear Joseph, I wish to conclude with a recommendation and a prayer. First a recommendation: Within a few moments I shall open on your shoulders the Book of the Word

of God. Please don't close it! Keep this book always open for the men and women you will meet on the road of your nomadic life.

And then a prayer that I take from the prayer of ordination: "May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfillment." Amen