

**BISHOP MCELROY'S HOMILY FOR THE ORDINATION OF
BISHOP JOHN DOLAN
AS AUXILIARY BISHOP OF SAN DIEGO
June 8, 2017 – St. Therese of Carmel Parish
(As Prepared)**

**MY BROTHER JOHN. THE GOSPEL READING WHICH YOU HAVE CHOSEN FOR THIS
ORDINATION CEREMONY COMES FROM THE FAREWELL DISCOURSE OF OUR LORD WITH HIS
DISCIPLES ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HE IS TO DIE. CHRIST'S WORDS REFLECT BOTH THE BEAUTY
OF THE COMMITMENT OF DISCIPLESHIP WHICH THE APOSTLES HAVE MADE IN ENTRUSTING
THEIR LIVES TO JESUS AND THE SENSE OF FAILURE AND BETRAYAL WHICH LIE AHEAD. THE
LORD LOOKS INTO THEIR HEARTS AND SEES THE HOPE AND SACRIFICE, THE HUMANNES AND
SPIRITUAL DEPTH, THE COURAGE AND LOVE WHICH LIE WITHIN THEM, AND HE SPEAKS TO
THEM INTIMATELY, AS FRIENDS, CONVEYING THE FOUR-FOLD MISSION WHICH HE IS
ENTRUSTING TO THEM IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.**

**TODAY, AS YOU ARE ORDAINED A BISHOP, THE LORD LOOKS INTO YOUR HEART AND
SEES THE SAME HOPE AND SACRIFICE, HUMANNES AND FAITH, COURAGE AND LOVE, AND
CALLS YOU IN INTIMACY AND FRIENDSHIP TO AN IDENTICAL FOUR-FOLD MISSION FOR THE
WHOLE OF YOUR EPISCOPAL MINISTRY.**

FIRST OF ALL, THE LORD CALLS YOU TO A LIFE OF JOY. "I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS SO THAT MY JOY MAY BE IN YOU AND YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE." JOHN, I HAVE KNOWN FEW PRIESTS WHO ARE AS JOYFUL IN THEIR LIFE AND MINISTRY AS YOU. IN NO SMALL PART THIS QUALITY IS THE GIFT OF YOUR PARENTS, WHOSE FAITH-FILLED COMPREHENSION OF THE MAGNIFICENT GLORIES OF GOD WHICH ABOUND IN THIS WORLD HAVE FORMED IN YOU A HEART THAT BURNS WITH A SENSE OF THE EXQUISITE BEAUTY OF LIFE.

AT THE SAME TIME, YOUR LIFE IN PRIESTHOOD HAS CONSTANTLY REMINDED YOU THAT TRUE CHRISTIAN JOY DOES NOT IGNORE THE SUFFERING AROUND US. IT PRECISELY ENTERS INTO THIS SUFFERING YET REFUSES TO BE IMPRISONED OR CRIPPLED BY IT. CHRISTIAN JOY ECHOES THE MAGNIFICENT WORDS OF PAUL VI IN EVANGELII NUNTIANDI WHICH ASSERTED THAT PROCLAIMING THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST IS ROOTED IN THE "DELIGHTFUL AND COMFORTING JOY OF EVANGELIZING, EVEN WHEN IT IS IN TEARS THAT WE MUST SOW." IN YOUR EPISCOPAL MINISTRY, GOD WILL CALL YOU TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL IN MANY TIMES OF JUBILATION AND MANY TIMES OF TEARS, AND TO FRAME THAT PROCLAMATION IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE POWER, AND THE MERCY AND THE LOVE OF GOD ARE THE SUREST FOUNDATION FOR OUR JOY AND THE ONLY ENDURING SOURCE FOR OUR CONSOLATION.

IF JOY IS THE LYNCHPIN OF THE MINISTRY WHICH THE LORD ENTRUSTED TO THE APOSTLES AT THE LAST SUPPER AND SIMILARLY ENTRUSTS TO YOU TODAY, LOVE IS ITS ANIMATING PRINCIPLE. "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU." THE MOST PENETRATING PASTORAL IMAGE WHICH THE LORD GIVES US IN THE GOSPELS IS THE IMAGE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD – TENDER, FAITHFUL, NURTURING, CHALLENGING, SELF-SACRIFICING. THE GOOD SHEPHERD DOES WHAT IS PRECISELY ABSURD IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD – LEAVING BEHIND THE NINETY-NINE IN ORDER TO RESCUE THE ONE LOST SHEEP. YOU MUST LOVE LIKE SUCH A SHEPHERD. YOU MUST DO WHAT IS OFTEN ABSURD IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD.

THE STRUCTURES OF THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE CAN MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO REFLECT THIS TYPE OF LOVE. THE INBUILT REMOTENESS FROM THE PASTORAL INTIMACY OF PARISH LIFE, THE LEGITIMATE NEED FOR FAIRNESS, EQUITY AND ORDER WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH WHICH BREEDS AN INEVITABLE ETHOS OF BUREAUCRATIZATION, THE SHEER VASTNESS AND COMPLEXITY OF THE MISSION OF A BISHOP IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH – ALL OF THESE MILITATE AGAINST THE TENDER, PERSONAL, COMMITTED LOVE OF WHICH JESUS SPEAKS. AS A RESULT, IT IS EASY TO FALL INTO THE TRAP OF BELIEVING THAT JESUS' WORDS WERE MEANT FOR A SIMPLER AGE, APPLICABLE ONLY WITHIN THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

BUT THE CALL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD TO TENDER LOVE IN THE MINISTRY OF A BISHOP, THE CALL TO TRUE ACCOMPANIMENT WHICH SEEKS TO ENGAGE WITH HEARTS AND SOULS PROFOUNDLY IN SERVICE TO THE GOSPEL, THE CALL TO CHERISH THE UNIQUENESS OF EVERY HUMAN PERSON, THESE CANNOT BE DIMINISHED IN THE HEART OF A BISHOP IF HE IS TO REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE LORD WHO SPEAKS IN FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE WITH THE DISCIPLES. IT IS THIS UNDIMINISHED CALL TO TENDER PASTORAL LOVE WHICH THE LORD GIVES TO YOU TODAY JOHN. IT IS THIS UNDIMINISHED CALL WHICH HAS LED YOU TO TAKE "ABIDE IN MY LOVE" AS YOUR EPISCOPAL MOTTO. MAY YOU ALWAYS RETAIN THE COMPASSION, SELF-SACRIFICE AND COMMITMENT TO PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT WHICH HAVE SUFFUSED YOUR PRIESTHOOD, AND MAY YOU NEVER BE AFRAID TO SEEM ABSURD IN RESCUING THE ONE LOST SHEEP IN THE FULL RECOGNITION THAT EVERY ONE OF US IS LOST AT SOME MOMENT OF OUR LIFE.

“YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU AND APPOINTED YOU SO THAT YOU MIGHT GO AND BEAR FRUIT – FRUIT THAT WILL LAST.” THE MISSIONARY EXHORTATION. IT IS THE MOST EXHILIRATING DIMENSION OF THE IDENTITY AND OFFICE OF A BISHOP. IN EVANGELII GAUDIUM, POPE FRANCIS UNDERSCORED THE REALITY THAT THE MISSIONARY EXHORTATION IS ENTRUSTED TO THE WHOLE CHURCH. “THE CHURCH WHICH ‘GOES FORTH’ IS A COMMUNITY OF MISSIONARY DISCIPLES WHO TAKE THE FIRST STEP, WHO ARE INVOLVED AND SUPPORTIVE, WHO BEAR FRUIT AND REJOICE. AN EVANGELIZING COMMUNITY KNOWS THAT THE LORD HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE, HE HAS LOVED US FIRST, AND THEREFORE WE CAN MOVE FORWARD, BOLDLY TAKE THE INITIATIVE, GO OUT TO OTHERS, SEEK THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN AWAY, STAND AT THE CROSSROADS AND WELCOME THE OUTCAST.”

THE CALL OF THE BISHOP IS TO SUPPORT AND ENERGIZE THIS MISSIONARY OUTREACH OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY OF THE CHURCH, WHILE ALSO BECOMING AN ARCHITECT AND MODEL OF THAT MISSIONARY IMPULSE. IT REQUIRES THE BISHOP TO NURTURE THE EXISTING ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY WITH LOVE, BUT TO ALSO CHALLENGE IT TO RENEWAL AND EXPANSION. A BISHOP MUST REFUSE TO BE BOUND BY FALSE CATEGORIES WHICH EXCLUDE MEN AND WOMEN FROM THE SAVING LIFE AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH, AND MUST SEEK TO SHATTER THE STRUCTURES THROUGH WHICH SOCIETY MARGINALIZES SO MANY, REFUSING TO SEE THE FACE OF CHRIST PRESENT IN ALL THOSE WHOM WE ENCOUNTER IN THIS WORLD.

BUT EVEN AS THE MISSIONARY EXHORTATION WHICH CHRIST ADDRESSED TO HIS DISIPLES AT THE LAST SUPPER CALLS THE APOSTLES TO GO OUT TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL, THIS EXHORTATION ALSO CHALLENGES THE APOSTLES TO AN INTERIOR MISSIONARY JOURNEY AS THEY EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH. THE INTERIOR PERSONAL JOURNEY OF PETER IN THE GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES SPEAKS OF THIS VERY TRANSFORMATION. ALWAYS A MAN OF ENERGY, EXHUBERANCE, LOVE AND ACTION, PETER IN HIS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPED A WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN TO OTHERS, CONCILIATE, COLLABORATE, SACRIFICE HIS VERY LIFE AND LEAVE BEHIND EVERY EARTHLY VALUE IN HIS LOVE FOR JESUS CHRIST AND THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL. PETER'S LIFE IS A LIFE OF EVER DEEPER TRANSFORMATION TOWARD GOD AND PASTORAL DEPTH.

SO TOO IT MUST BE FOR EVERY BISHOP, AND FOR YOU, JOHN, AS YOU BEGIN YOUR EPISCOPAL MINISTRY. OUR HOLY FATHER CHOSE YOU TO BE A BISHOP BECAUSE OF ALL THAT YOU HAVE BEEN IN AND FOR OUR LOCAL CHURCH. BUT THE LORD ON THIS DAY ALSO CHOOSES YOU FOR WHO YOU WILL BECOME IN SERVICE TO THE CHURCH. THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP IN FOSTERING UNITY, TEACHING THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, PRAYERFULLY CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENTS, BUILDING UP THE PRESBYTERATE, WITNESSING TO THE MORAL LAW, DISCERNING THE MOST PRESSING PRIORITIES WITHIN THE DIOCESE – ALL OF THESE DIMENSIONS OF EPISCOPAL MINISTRY WILL CHALLENGE AND TRANSFORM YOU BY SUMMONING YOU OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE, REVEALING NEW TALENTS AND GIFTS IN YOUR CHARACTER AND DEMANDING A HEROIC COMMITMENT TO SURRENDER YOUR PRIORITIES, PATTERNS OF LIFE, AND TREASURED ASSUMPTIONS. MAY YOU NEVER BE AFRAID TO GROW AND CHANGE IN THE LORD’S SERVICE AS PETER DID, SEEKING ALWAYS TO FEED MORE FULLY THE LAMBS OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE FINAL DIMENSION OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSION CONTAINED IN TODAY’S GOSPEL IS THAT OF HOPE. JESUS SAYS IN OUR GOSPEL FOR THIS MASS “THE FATHER WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU ASK OF HIM IN MY NAME.”

TODAY IS A DAY OF OVERWHELMING HOPE IN OUR LOCAL CHURCH. A MAN BORN IN OUR MIDST, EDUCATED IN OUR SCHOOLS, COMMITTED TO A LIFE OF PRIESTLY SERVICE FOR THE PEOPLE OF SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES, A LEADER OF OUR PRESBYTERATE AND A MAN OF PROFOUND CATHOLIC FAITH, WILL BECOME IN GOD’S GRACE OUR AUXILIARY BISHOP.

CHRISTIAN HOPE IS NOT THE BELIEF THAT EVERYTHING TURNS OUT WELL; THAT IS MERELY OPTOMISM. CHRISTIAN HOPE IS THE CONVICTION THAT IN EVERY SITUATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING, GOD STANDS WITH US. THAT IS WHY JESUS POINTS TO HOPE IN THE INESCAPABLE LOVE AND GENEROSITY OF THE FATHER AT THE PRECISE MOMENT WHEN THE DARKNESS OF HIS PASSION AND DEATH ARE IMMINENT.

BISHOP DOLAN, AS YOU BEGIN YOUR EPISCOPAL MINISTRY, MAY YOU ALWAYS BE AN APOSTLE OF HOPE. MAY YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY PROCLAIM TO A WORLD FILLED WITH SUFFERING, TURMOIL, DESPERATION AND DESPAIR THE MESSAGE WHICH SAINT JOHN PAUL ETCHED UPON THE SOUL OF THE WORLD: "I PLEAD WITH YOU. NEVER, EVER GIVE UP ON HOPE. NEVER DOUBT. NEVER TIRE. AND NEVER BECOME DISCOURAGED. BE NOT AFRAID."

BE NOT AFRAID, BISHOP JOHN DOLAN, FOR TODAY YOU UNDERTAKE A MINISTRY SUFFUSED WITH JOY, LOVE, AND HOPE OFFERED IN UNION WITH YOUR BROTHER BISHOPS AND PRIESTS IN SERVICE TO THE WHOLE PILGRIM PEOPLE OF GOD OF WHICH YOU ARE A PART. MAY YOU ALWAYS ABIDE IN GOD'S LOVE AND KNOW THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS ABIDE IN OURS.

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