



Mass of Priestly Ordination – Renald Anthony – Homily

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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In a few moments, when Renald steps forward to offer himself for ordination as a priest, I will, in the name of the Church, question him about his intentions. This will not be a mere formality for the questions are very important and give expression to what it is Renald is taking on by responding to the Lord's call.

Among those questions, the last is perhaps the most important and I would like to draw the attention of all of us, and not just Renald, to that question now. "Do you resolve," I will ask Renald, "to be united more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered Himself for us to the Father as a pure Sacrifice, and with Him to consecrate yourself to God for the salvation of all?" We all hope, Renald, not only that your answer tonight will be "I do" but that this will be the answer you give every day of your life from now on. In the end, this is what God is asking of you: that you model your life on Jesus, making yourself an offering to God for the sake of His people, just as Jesus offered His life for the salvation of all. Through your ordination tonight, the Holy Spirit will reshape you from within so that, if you are open to God's grace, you will become more and more an effective and attractive instrument through which the Lord can continue to be among His people as their priest and as their shepherd.

Tonight, of course, Renald becomes an ordained priest in and for a Church which the New Testament describes as a "priestly people". In our Catholic tradition, we know that there is really only one priest, Jesus Christ. He gave His life for us and, through that gift, He has opened up the way of reconciliation with God for each one of us. As long as we stay united with Christ, we are also united with His Father in heaven – and this unity will reach its completion when we come to the end of our lives and begin to live the new life of heaven. Because, as the Church, we are united to Christ and are together the body of Christ, then we share, all of us, in His priesthood. Just as Jesus gave His life for the well-being, the salvation, of all, so we as Christians are called to do the same. This, in the end, is really what Christian priesthood is all about. Our faith does not invite us to close in on ourselves, build walls to protect ourselves, and seek to live comfortable, safe lives. Our faith calls us instead to look outwards rather than inwards and to reach out with courage and with hope to a world that desperately needs to hear and believe the message of Jesus.

Each one of us is called to make of our lives an offering to God for the sake of His people. Most of you in the Cathedral tonight do this as married couples and as parents. You offer your lives first and foremost to your



families as a gift and, in doing so, you become living signs of Jesus who offered Himself to and for others. But, whether we are married or single, young or old, healthy or sick, we are all called to put our lives at the service of others so that their lives might be richer because we have carried Christ to them. We are a priestly people because, in response to the command of Jesus, we, like Him, are ready to break our bodies and spill our blood – we are ready, in other words, to give ourselves fully to others – to help make their lives all that God wants them to be.

If this is true for every single one of us here in the Cathedral tonight, it is especially true for you, Renald. The Lord is asking a great deal of us, and we need to be reminded that this is our task in the world, and the Lord's will for us. One of the central responsibilities you will have as a priest is to keep this call before us. You will do so in your celebration of the sacraments, in your preaching and in your teaching. But you will also do so, if you are open to God's grace, in every aspect of your life. From tonight onwards, you will, in a sense, no longer be a private person: you will be a living sign that Jesus walks among us as our shepherd, as our leader, as the one who gives everything for us. You will do this at the altar and in the confessional, in the parish school and in the presbytery. But you will also do this when you meet your people in the supermarket, or when you go out for a meal with your friends, or when you go on your annual holiday. But, in all these different situations, you will only be able to be a living sign of the presence of Jesus among His people if you really do resolve tonight to be united more closely every day to Christ the High Priest. You will need, as tonight's Gospel reminds us, to be ready and dressed for action, your lamp alight and your hand at the door, eager to let the Lord into your life, but only so that both you and He can then go out together into the darkness and confusion of our lives carrying your lamp of hope.

This is a huge task and a daunting challenge. As all of us in the Cathedral tonight reflect on what is happening in Renald's life, I am sure we realise that, as much as we need him and the gift of his priesthood, he equally needs us and the gift of our support and our prayer. When Renald and I met last week to discuss tonight's celebration, Renald told me of how deeply conscious he is of the faith of his family and of the community in which he grew up in India. He knows that he stands here tonight carrying gladly and humbly the prayers, the faith and the courage of so many people. As he leaves the Cathedral at the end of our celebration, he needs to know that he takes with him the prayers, the faith and the support of all of us in the Archdiocese who are now his family in the faith. We need him to be a man of prayer, of faith, of humility, compassion and courage, and our prayers and our support will help him to be this for us and among us.

Let us begin to fulfill this obligation toward him right now. Let us accompany him with our deep and heartfelt prayer as he opens himself to the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit who will, in a few moments, reshape Renald from within and make him a living sign that our Good Shepherd is still with us and will never abandon us.