



## **Ordination of Br Reginald Mary Chua OP**

### **Homily**

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

**Friday 18 December, 2020  
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

Just last week, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, Pope Francis inaugurated a special year of Saint Joseph. This special year marks the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as the patron of the Universal Church by Pope Pius IX.

This evening as Brother Reginald Mary Chua, in this solemn liturgy of priestly ordination, steps forward with great faith and great courage to offer himself for priestly ministry within the Lord's Church, I want to offer to Brother Reginald, and indeed to all of us taking part in this ordination ceremony whether here in the cathedral or online, the figure of Saint Joseph as a model for us to follow and as a saint to whom we can entrust ourselves in prayer.

In my years as a bishop I have often found myself celebrating the Ordination Liturgy during the season of Advent, and it has always seemed to me to be important to suggest to the person being ordained that he should consider himself, in a particular way, what we might call an "Advent priest". For surely the vocation of a priest can be understood as a call to prepare the way for the Lord so that when he comes, and in the way he chooses to come into the lives of his people, they are ready to receive him.

As I reflect on Advent it occurs to me that there are perhaps three main Advent figures in our Christian story. These figures, these people are, of course, John the Baptist, Saint Joseph and Mary the mother of the Lord. There is much to ponder in the story of each of these people for a man who is on the verge of receiving the grace of priestly ordination. It is indeed a wonderful and even overpowering gift. Our Catholic tradition teaches very clearly that a priest is called from God's people, and sent to be with God's people, as a living and effective sign, we might even say a "sacrament", of the presence of Christ among his people as their Good Shepherd. The dignity of the priesthood, and the love and respect which faithful Catholics have always shown to priests, is grounded in this reality. But lest this great dignity, and the respect and affection of God's people, lead the priest to think of himself as someone special or deserving of privileged treatment, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Joseph and Mary the mother of the Lord, remind the priest, as they remind all of us, that priests are meant to be shining examples of the discipleship of Jesus to which we are all called.



These three great heroes of our faith have much to teach us, but in particular and in the context of what the Lord will do tonight for Brother Reginald, it is the extraordinary humility which marks the life of each of them which becomes particularly significant.

The words of Saint John the Baptist, for example, should ring loudly in the hearts of every priest. “There is one who is greater than me”, says John the Baptist, “and I am not worthy even to untie the strap of his sandals”. “Look”, he says to his followers, “there is the Lamb of God. Follow him”. And, perhaps most tellingly of all, St John the Baptist says of Jesus, “He must grow greater and I must grow smaller”. When God gives the gift of the priesthood to a man he does so not primarily for the man himself but rather for God’s people, so that through a priest’s humble and Christ-like service people might be drawn closer to the Lord.

The words of Mary also speak powerfully of the importance of true humility. When Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth and sings her beautiful hymn of praise she acknowledges what God has done for her. “The Almighty”, she says, “has done great things for me. Holy is his name”. Tonight the Lord will do great things for you, Brother Reginald and it is true that like Mary you too are saying yes to what God is asking of you, but even that yes is the work of God’s grace. It is God who is mighty; it is God who is holy; and all we can do is say, as Mary did, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let God’s will be done in me”.

And then there is Saint Joseph. The gospel portrait of this great man shows us someone who is caught up in a mystery far beyond his understanding but who is, nevertheless, deeply and radically open to accepting God’s will in his life and responding with courage, initiative, humility and simplicity. Only Mary herself was more intimately involved in the extraordinary and unfathomable mystery of the incarnation: both she and Saint Joseph experienced this mystery, we might say, from the inside in a way that no-one else could. It was surely this that led Mary to be a woman who pondered deeply over the events of her life and whose unfailing response of fidelity to God’s presence in her life was the result of this prayerful pondering. We should not doubt that this was true of Saint Joseph as well.

For you tonight, Brother Reginald, perhaps the most important dimension of the life of Saint Joseph is found in his fatherhood. Following tonight’s ordination you will be known as Father Reginald. In reflecting on Saint Joseph’s fatherhood, and insisting that this also applies to priests and consecrated religious, Pope Francis makes the point very strongly that our world today needs fathers. We have no use, he says, “for tyrants who would dominate others as a means of compensating for their own needs”. He goes on to say that we do not need fathers “who confuse authority with authoritarianism, service with civility, discussion with oppression, charity with a welfare mentality, or power with destruction”. This is as true of spiritual fathers as it is of natural fathers. It is only in opening ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit who can shape us into people who are “meek and humble of heart”, as Jesus was, that we can become the disciples that God has called us and is calling us to be. It is only in becoming meek and humble of heart that you, Brother Reginald, can be the priest the Lord is calling you to be.



Tonight we pray for you, Brother Reginald, as you open yourself to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. May God's grace, which tonight moulds you into a living image of Christ the Priest, continue to animate everything you say, everything you do, everything you are. You have already lived for some years the consecrated life of the Dominican Order, committed to the common life with your brothers and to the vows of obedience poverty and chastity. May the prayers of Saint Dominic and all the saints of the Dominican family, and the prayers of our three great Advent saints - Mary the mother of God, Saint Joseph her most chaste spouse, and Saint John the Baptist, accompany you and support you in all that lies ahead.