

Homily
Ordination
Carlos Gomez
December 18, 2016
Cathedral of St. Ambrose
Des Moines

God, in his goodness, provides signs for us in order that we might be attuned to his initiatives as he establishes and extends his relationship with the human community. And thus, as we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent the premier, lasting sign is foretold by Isaiah: “The virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.” The sign is fulfilled as Joseph cooperates fully with the angelic revelation and takes Mary, the virgin, into his home. Shortly, thereafter Mary gives birth to Jesus in Bethlehem. Jesus is the definitive sacrament, the sign of God’s unbreakable covenant with the human family.

The presence of Jesus is extended in time through us, the Church, and particularly through the ministers of the Church, the priests. The Second Vatican Council describes the priest as one, who stands in the place of Christ, the head. Thus, as we ordain our brother, Carlos Gomez, to the priesthood, the preeminent sign of Jesus in the world continues. Jesus is born again through the moment of ordination enabling us to come in contact with God in the flesh and blood.

As a sign of the living presence of Jesus, Carlos will take on the identity of the Savior in three particular ways in the exercise of ministry.

The first dimension is traced back to the birth of Jesus. When he was born, where was he placed? He was placed in a manger. This reality communicated the humility as well as the accessibility of the Christ. He chose to come among us very simply as one open to all. Even the animals were able to saunter by, look down and view this God. And so, as Carlos is about to exercise the ministry of Jesus he is called to be open, accessible and humble.

The second moment which lends precision to the identity of the priest as another Christ is the Last Supper. After having completed the Paschal Meal with the Apostles in which he instituted the First Mass, Jesus went from Apostle to Apostle and much to their protest washed their feet. “As I have done for you so you must do for one another.” Henceforward, the priest is expected to be servant, attending to the basic needs of those to whom he is sent.

The third experience whereby the priest is incorporated into the Christ is on Calvary. The Evangelist John describes the passion and death of Jesus as the moment of his glory. We protest, how can this ignominious, painful and humiliating scene be considered as an expression of glory? The Evangelist elucidates his point by demonstrating that here Jesus fulfills the will of the Father. The night before in terrible agony the Lord had prayed, “not my will but thy will be done.”

Thus, Father Carlos, through priestly ordination extends the presence of the Emmanuel by accepting, developing and expressing the very attributes of God. The extent of serving has been expanded by Pope Francis in his annual washing of the feet on Holy Thursday. The Holy Father has pointed out what is intended by symbolic action: . . . “when we (priests) let ourselves be chosen by Jesus, it is to serve: to serve the people of God, to serve the poor, men and women who are outcasts, living in the fringes of society, to serve children and the elderly. But also to serve people who are unaware of their own pride and sin, to serve Jesus in them.” (Meeting with priests, religious and seminarians, November 26, 2015) Entering into the lives of all not only does the priest offer sacrifice individually but with all the people united with Jesus, the eternal priest, one gift is rendered to the Father.

With Jesus, the priest is also called to be a bridge bringing all together in unity. This is expressed at the heart of his sacramental ministry connecting us with the Father whose love knows no bounds.

- The priest baptizes, initiating the son or daughter into God’s very life which is nourished and strengthened by the sustaining food of eternal life – the Eucharist. And when the

bonds of relationship with God are severed by willful sin, the reality established in Baptism is restored by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- In Christian marriage the two, husband and wife, become one symbolizing the covenant of God and people.
- Finally, the care, the grounding, the compassion of Jesus' ministry is accomplished through the priest's administering the Sacrament of the Sick.

Carlos, by virtue of your background and preparation you will also become a bridge as you bring together our Hispanic and Anglo communities in the spirit of Jesus. Through the language and culture of each you will facilitate our pathway to eventual unity. By leading in progressive integration we will grow deeply into that one family which God wills: "That we all might be one in you, Father, you in me and I in you."

For those of us called to ordained priesthood we acknowledge, as Carlos does today, the rare privilege of making present in concrete fashion that remarkable sign foretold by Isaiah: Emmanuel, God with us.

Carlos, we eagerly anticipate the unfolding activity in your ministry that will fulfill the mission of Jesus in our time. Thus, we welcome your ordination.

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad."