

HOMILY
Vespers Service
Bishop Richard Pates
May 28, 2008

I am very happy to be here – in Des Moines. I am grateful for the call to serve and appreciate the welcome and the generous reception that has been extended to me from all sides.

On this eve of my installation as the ninth bishop of Des Moines my mood is reflective. It harkens back to those moments of intimacy that Jesus shared with his close friends on the eve of his death and the birth of the Church when he prayed not only for them but us as well.

On that occasion Jesus spoke of his relationship with the Father and the Spirit and that what he was about was not to end in the here and now. But it was to be extended into eternity. The means of arriving at this desired goal was to remain connected with him and remain in his love. And we manifest love for him by doing what he commanded.

His command is to love one another and to remain faithful in unity. If we live in such a way we are assured that the spirit, the very spirit of God dwells in us.

Like Paul, we recognize that all are given gifts for the benefit of all in order that God's desire – our sharing in his love - might be experienced as widely as possible. Thus, I look forward to exercising ministry with you in the Spirit as Jesus envisioned it.

I especially welcome the anticipated relationship with the presbyterate and its individual priests. We participate in the Sacramental priesthood of Christ and etched deeply in the hearts of each of us is the imprint of this character. Love and unity come about in our commitment to healthy fraternity, mutual support and accountability. Pope Benedict captured the benefit of such an approach. "Each of us knows how important priestly fraternity has been in our lives. That fraternity is not only a precious possession, but also an immense resource for the renewal of the priesthood and the raising up of new vocations." (Benedict XVI, Vespers with Bishops; April 16, 2008)

The particular gifts the deacons bring to our ecclesial unity are founded in Word and Eucharist but are especially witnessed to in service. Oftentimes joined by your wives in this outreach you remind us by the gift of yourselves that what we do for our least brothers and sisters, we do for Jesus. By being such servants you will help this community and this bishop to be constantly aware of the Church's preferential option for the poor.

Francophiles take great pride in the French origin of our city's name – monks, an apparent reference to those missionaries who boldly made their way from the Mississippi River to minister to those of us in the West. Vowed religious women and men are an integral part of the believing community. We need the contemplative spirit that you

HOMILY
Vespers Service
Bishop Richard Pates
May 28, 2008

embody. What is more important than pursuing day in and day out relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit in whom ultimate meaning is found?

Pope Benedict identified this thrust among all of us: “People today need to be reminded of the ultimate purpose of their lives. They need to recognize that implanted within them is a deep thirst for God. They need to be given opportunities to drink from the wells of his infinite love.” (Address to Bishops; National Shrine; April 16, 2008)

On the continuing pilgrimage to the eschaton, you vowed religious keep us on the most direct route. You are indispensable for the journey.

Developing within the contemporary framework of the Church is the wonderful phenomenon which, still in nascent stages, has been titled: “Lay ecclesial ministry.” All of you lay women and men who serve the institutional Church have proven to be invaluable. You enrich our mission by your competence, vision and discipleship.

Constituting the Church of Des Moines are all of us who have been initiated into the life of the Lord Jesus, profess the one faith and are emboldened to strive to be light and salt for the world in which we live. We thus stretch the unity and love that we experience in community to all. May our commitment to this vision intensify in the days ahead.

The Church of Des Moines seeks to be in relation with all, our fellow Christians, all believers, citizens of this city and Iowa, political and business leaders and those who enhance cultural life. Count us as partners in the pursuit of the common good, social justice, the uplifting of the human spirit. Let us work together to fulfill our human potential for the benefit of all.

We rest this evening in the embrace of God’s love. Our hearts are filled with confidence and joy as we entrust ourselves to “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:6)