

**Homily
Ordination
Chori Seraiah
July 8, 2012
St. Ambrose Cathedral
Bishop Richard Pates**

The journey of Chori Seraiah has been a long, step by step experience whereupon he engaged in an ever more profound relationship not only with the Christ of history but also with the Christ of today who resides in the Church – Christ’s Body alive in the world.

His most recent and seemingly last step on this journey is his belonging to the Anglican tradition that has been provided the opportunity to enter the Catholic Church through the provisions of the Apostolic Constitution – Anglicanorum Coetibus.

Reality followed upon promise with the establishment of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter on January 1st of this year. The first Ordinary of this community is Monsignor Jeffrey Steenson. Basically, the Ordinariate has the status of a diocese in union with the Church of Rome. Rather than being based on geographical determination, its membership comes from those who identify with the Anglican tradition and who maintain certain aspects of that tradition.

As Chori is ordained a priest today, he does so under the title of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter. But the priesthood which is conferred on him is the one priesthood of Jesus Christ as embraced by the universal Catholic Church.

Underlying the driving force which has brought Chori to this day is the motivation of unity. He has gained insight from the perspective of the early church which illuminates the will of Christ. There is the desire to have this insight take shape in our time through the contemporary community of believers served by various ministries especially that of priesthood.

In accomplishing the goal of unity, Paul in the letter to the Ephesians, proclaimed in the liturgy of today, challenges the members of the Church “to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received . . . striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one lord, one faith, one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

The priesthood imparted upon Chori this morning with an everlasting character for “building up the Body of Christ” is described, by the Second Vatican Council as exercised by one who stands “in loco Christi” or “in loco Christi Capitis.” The priest is called to be in the place of Christ or in the place of Christ the head.

This calling is not meant to be in the abstract but in the immediacy of the present. Chori is being anointed in the Spirit of Jesus “to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the

broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord . . .”

Three sacraments, reserved to the priest, beautifully illustrate how the person of Christ made present in the moment achieves unity among the Church, God’s people.

The sacrament of the sick relates Christ to those who have pain and suffering either physically or spiritually as was so often the case in the Gospels. God is there with his spirit of love clearly communicating his desire for wholeness and integration of each person. His healing gives evidence of God’s acceptance, compassion and love intended for all of us. We attain unity individually and in the context of the whole.

The sacrament of reconciliation is that which actuates the power entrusted to the disciples as described in today’s Gospel: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” The healing of the soul promotes unity by absolving sin which engenders separation and disunity from God and the Church. It brings peace to both individual and community. It stimulates a direction in life which encourages cohesion and a commitment to the common good.

Today, Chori will also be entrusted with the power to preside at Eucharist. He will be given the privilege of calling down the powerful Holy Spirit and the gifts of bread and wine will be transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus. Then, in the place of Christ, as priest, he will lead the priestly people in identifying with Christ in the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus. This mystery is not repeated but made present in the perfect sacrifice rendered to the Father which has won salvation for us.

From the altar we are nourished by that divine food which transforms us. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that through this food we become evermore one with God. We take on the characteristics of God such as love, compassion, forgiveness, selflessness. Such transformation overcomes the barriers of separation, of hostility, of disunity that pull us away from our most authentic identity.

Today Chori graciously receives from Christ a share in the one priesthood. It is not given to him for his own personal needs or gratification but for the sake of service. Priesthood is rooted in sacramentality meaning that Chori personally is a sign by the dedication of a priest’s life exercised in the visible sacraments intended to bring all into one in Christ.

Standing in “loco Christi” the priest is expected to extend the remarkable gift of God made flesh. Pope Benedict XVI highlights the unifying force Christ achieves through the ministry of the priest: “Christ’s gift of himself implies the aspiration to attract all to communion in his body, to unite the world. Only in communion with Christ, the exemplary man, one with God, does the world thus become as we all wish it to be: a mirror of divine love. This dynamism is ever present in the Eucharist; this dynamism must inspire and form our life.” (General Audience, Paul VI Audience Hall, January 7, 2009).

We join Chori on his journey. We disciples of Christ are all fellow pilgrims. We assure this soon to be priest of our support and prayer and our pledge to unite our ministries with his as we seek to achieve the heartfelt prayer of Jesus.

“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”

(John 17:20-21)