

Homily

Ryan Andrew Ordination St. Ambrose Cathedral Diocese of Des Moines

December 14, 2018

Tonight's ordination of Ryan Andrew as priest comes closely after we celebrated significant feasts of Mary, the Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe. They are a good introduction to what we are about.

Each of the feasts of Mary uses the Gospel of the Annunciation – which conveys Mary's openness to God's design. "Be it done unto me according to thy will." On the life journey with Jesus, she witnesses the unfolding of the Kingdom climaxing in agonizing death. But this was transformed by the Resurrection, where the good news of salvation goes forth, never to be quenched.

Our Lady of Guadalupe announces that the Gospel is applicable to all peoples especially to the poor and humble. St. Juan Diego became the relator: in God's eyes all people are equal, all are entitled to experience the dignity that is theirs by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God. The recipients of this message of Mary, Patroness of the Americas, are consoled by the profound and tender love for each one of us.

Tonight, Ryan Andrew identifies with Mary's response. After years of seminary preparation, Ryan is prepared to place himself totally in service to the kingdom. The words of Jeremiah come to fulfillment:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you
before you were born I dedicated you."

Ryan struggled, similar to those before him, with accepting this identity protesting his unworthiness and pleading Jeremiah's reaction, "I am too young."

Like Mary, God insists on the calling despite protests. Ryan, therefore, takes on the responsibility of proclaiming the very word of God who observes: "See, I place my words in your mouth!"

Undertaking such a role as mediator between God and fellow members of the human family is indeed an awesome task, a challenging undertaking. Ryan does so, however, fully cognizant as the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that, "he himself is beset by weakness."

Thus, recognizing his own unworthiness he will be ordained in the person of Christ to make sacrifice in reparation for the sins of all. That sacrifice, the death and Resurrection of Jesus, the

Paschal Mystery, is made present through the instrumentality of the priest at Mass and the other sacraments.

As Ryan engages his relationship in the role of Jesus as priest, which the Second Vatican Council describes as one “who takes the place of Christ the head” he does so in an environment that seeks to counter the reputation fostered by some in the clerical sexual abuse crisis. For Christ is Ryan’s partner in prayer. Christ is the way of humility. It is the same Christ who has been present to the overwhelming number of priests, though far from perfect, in faithful service and fulfillment of ministry rendered by them.

If you know Ryan, you know also, that he is not one to embrace clericalism which Pope Francis decries as a seriously contributing factor in the current crisis. In applying an artificial character of privilege, the cleric can be led to consider himself a rank above others and thus not subject to the restraining discipline judiciously applied across the board. Certainly, Jesus countered this notion of privilege, of superiority. He is the servant of all. After washing the feet of the Apostles, he instructed them: “What I have done for you, you must do for one another.” Ryan is blessed with the virtue of humility. He aspires to no special privilege in the ways of life.

As Ryan enters into the New Moment of his life as priest, one feature of his ministry is particularly crucial for our times.

In his farewell prayer with the Apostles after the Last Supper, the first Mass, Jesus ardently prayed to the Father for the closest of his associates, the first priests:

“Consecrate them in truth as you sent me into the world, so I send them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.”

Few ministries of the priest are as relevant as communicating the truth. Despite the fact that lying is intrinsically evil, it is robustly alive in our culture. It flies in the face of the dignity of the human person, who by nature is entitled to the knowledge of that which is, to reality.

Because Jesus is truth, one arrives at truth through relationship with Jesus. Ryan will become the bridge introducing and facilitating loving friendship so that those he serves will engage with the Father, Son and especially Jesus. Those entrusted to his shepherding care will come to experience the great satisfaction of the truth.

The ordination tonight holds special meaning for me. Eight or so years ago, for an initial visit I drove Ryan and another young man, Kevin Kauzlarich, to the St. Paul Seminary and back. It has been fortunate for me to be closely associated with Ryan on his path to priesthood. I can assure the Church of Des Moines that his ordination is a genuine blessing.