

Ordination and Installation Mass REVISED Post-Communion Remarks
 Bishop Wm. M. Joensen, Ph.D.
 St. Francis of Assisi Church, West Des Moines IA
 27 September 2019

I hope these remarks will be nowhere near as long as last night's vespers service homily!

Brother David's CIA swimmers balk at poolside: get in the water! Today we've plunged into the water of the Spirit flowing from the temple that Ezekiel describes in our first reading. It's already pretty deep, as 108 years of this Des Moines Diocese, and now 10 bishops attest. Much reason for gratitude as buoyed up by your prayer and presence—prayers that were very intentional from the time Bp. Pates submitted his letter of resignation more than a year-and-a-half ago. An enormous amount of preparation long before anyone knew who your next bishop would be by countless numbers of folks, and we have experienced the fruit of these labors especially at last night's vespers service and today in this first-in-seventy+ years episcopal ordination in the Des Moines Diocese. Things have been so splendid you'd think they did this every four or five years!

I can't or won't personally thank everyone, and I know I risk omitting someone with a significant role, but I do need to give a shout-out to several folks:

- Bishop Pates, for whom my esteem has only ticked upward (joy, but also grief, as well as grief as you go to bury your mentor and friend, Abp. Harry Flynn, this Monday in St. Paul).
- Abp. Christophe Pierre, papal nuncio to the U.S., representative of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. . . who himself celebrated his 24th anniversary as a bishop this past Tuesday.
- Staff of the Diocesan Pastoral Center, including The Catholic Mirror. . . Sr. Jude Fitzpatrick the doyenne, who celebrated 60 years of religious life most recently.
- Fr. Ray McHenry and all the staff and parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, for letting us use your house—not a house divided, but united. Also, confirmation class and staff at St. Anthony's Parish for moving your celebration back a day. . .and Bp. Pates for covering that confirmation until I get in the saddle on Sunday at Sacred Heart. . . and to whoever the couple who has their wedding rehearsal here at 5:30 PM.
- Liturgy planning team: Fr. Trevor Chicoine, Fr. Tim Fitzgerald, music maestra Aimee Beckmann Collier and Kyle Lechtenberg of OLIH, the priest MC's; also Fr. Ricky Manalo, whose newly commissioned psalm response especially for this and last night's liturgy now becomes part of our diocesan musical repertoire, and of course, for the splendid choir and musicians; please join me in thanking them.
- Family and friends and classmates, some of whom came from various parts of the country to be here. Will name only two: my Mom, Marilyn Simington Joensen. When my Dad Al died a year ago last May, Mom reflected on their marriage and how, having lost her own father when she was five years old, she had not grown up witnessing what it was to be married: I had to make it up! You fooled us—you always had the family and faith first, always seemed to know what you were doing—and were not shy to let us know how you felt about what we were and were not doing. Mom: when asked to write a Palanca letter by Loras campus ministry staff member D. Gross for Antioch retreat, responded: why would I do

that—that's his job! Mom, I've got a new job! No letters, but ceaseless prayers. Great love that led her to care for Dad at home at great personal toll until she could do so no longer. We've reflected on how Dad would relish this day. . . and would have had a thousand questions. . . two at a time. Fr. Ray, you should be grateful that you are spared his interrogation about the HVAC system here at St. Francis!

- Abp. Jackels, Bps. Nickless and Zinkula, Abp. Hanus, bishops (+Abp. Kucera), and brother priests: (1) Dubuque, who haven't shaken my dust from their boots, but are here in remarkable numbers. Of course, includes my own uncle, Msgr. Ralph Simington, now retired in Waterloo, his hometown—God's great ambassador for the humanity and solidarity of priestly fraternity. Repeat story of pounds ordained? Members of my own prayer group: 26+ years together. Msgr. Leon Connolly of Dubuque, who died eight years ago today, and Msgr. Paul Connelly of DM, who died 12 years ago today, and Fr. Gene KOch of DM, who approaches death and the threshold of heaven as we speak. (2) Des Moines priests, whom we will rapidly have the opportunity to get to know each other at next week's annual priests' workshop.
- Many who've written, sent emails and texts, who've reached out with great hope and affirmation far beyond what I see when I look in the mirror or sit before the Blessed Sacrament. I understand that the school children of St. Teresa's Parish here in Des Moines are taking turns praying in Eucharistic Adoration today. Thank you. I appreciate the members of the Loras Community who are here, including Pres. Jim Collins of Loras, and others who are gathered watching in the Ballrooms in the ACC—Go Duhawks!--and folks in the hall here, at St. Cecilia's in Ames, and elsewhere.

Steve White, who is here today, who besides being a husband and father of four, and other duties, oversees the Catholic Project at The Catholic University of America, had a sister get married last year, and at the reception, gave a talk and toast that some might think a bit of a downer, but for persons of Catholic, Christian faith, is a blessing: "There's a finality to marriage that many find daunting, even terrifying: dedicating yourself to one person for the rest of your life, 'til death do us part. No one wants to give up his own life. But our faith sees it differently, as Our Lord tells us, whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Jesus is the Bridegroom who lays down his life for his Bride, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. There's great freedom in knowing who it is you are to lay down your life for—in knowing just who it is you are dying for." I would add: We all want someone, someones, for whom we will give our love and lay down our lives, and to discover this not in abstraction, but very concretely, dispelling some mystery, but deepening it as well as we are carried downstream to the place where fruits of the Spirit bring healing and life. Now I know, for God willing, the next 16—er, 17 years?—how I am going to die—espoused to this Diocese, laying myself down as God permits. John Irving's fictional character Owen Meaney prepared himself for such a critical moment. . . God has prepared me, I believe, but we are in this together, united in the Body in whom Christ is the head and exemplar. All of us take part, regardless of age, including our young people.

Earlier this year, in his exhortation to young people and the entire People of God, “Christ Lives,” Pope Francis exclaimed, “The Lord is calling us to enkindle stars in the night of other young people. He asks you to look to the true stars, all those varied signs he gives us to guide our way, and to imitate the farmer who watches the stars before going out to plough his field.” Where some see mainly clouds, darkness, and confusion, we see light—the light of Christ reflected on your faces, the light of hope that you bear” (n. 33).

The Pope recognizes that you don’t have to agree with everything adults say or approve their actions”—and we know that some of the Church’s actions in the past merit reproach—and to bring your critical spirit to bear on your lives. But at the same time, “be open to the wisdom passed down from generation to generation, a wisdom familiar with human weakness and not deserving to vanish” (n. 190). So, for us, helping young people discover the richness of the past—not simply the traditions and rituals of an episcopal ordination, but the whole deposit of faith—to treasure memory and make use of it for your choices and opportunities, is a genuine act of love” for you (n. 186). “The life that Jesus gives us is a love story, a life history that wants to blend with ours and sink roots in the soil of our own lives”—not in the cloud or an app or a newsfeed—but an invitation to be part of a love story interwoven with our stories, waiting to be born in our midst” (n. 252).

So, as our lives are blended and bound ever more closely by the Spirit that joins the Father and Son, may the stream get deeper, the love become all in all, as we live the life that is true life: Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen!