

"He will descend upon each of these deacons, transforming them into priests of Jesus Christ: priests forever."

The homily given by Bishop Javier Echevarria, the Prelate of Opus Dei, in Rome during the ordination ceremony on May 26, 2007.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, Dearest Deacons:

1. You have been preparing for many months now for this day in which our Lord Jesus Christ, by means of the imposition of my hands and the consecratory prayer, will constitute you priests of the New Covenant. Many people throughout the world, your families, your friends, all of your brothers and sisters in Opus Dei, have prayed and continue to pray for each one of you.

Our prayer has been even more intense in these final days, as we have been preparing for Pentecost. We have sought to imitate Jesus' Apostles, who after the Ascension of our Master to Heaven, came together in the Cenacle of Jerusalem to keep vigil "*with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*"

Finally, the great day has arrived. Today this Basilica of St. Eugene's is for us that Upper Room where the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the holy women waited for the Holy Spirit's arrival. Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, teaches us to pray. She shows us, as the Pope said in his recent visit to Brazil, "the way to open our minds and hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit, who comes to fill the whole world."

Once again, hidden under the liturgical signs, the Paraclete will descend upon the Church and over each one of us. He will descend upon each of these deacons, transforming them into priests of Jesus Christ: priests forever. Let us recollect ourselves, then, and meditate on the presence and action of the Paraclete in the Church and in our souls: He is the *Dominus tecum!* that we refer to in the Hail Mary.

2. The Scripture readings in the Mass speak to us about the universality of the sanctifying action of God the Holy Spirit. *Then, afterward, I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind...Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be rescued.* In the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul teaches that, although we have already received the first fruits of the Spirit, all of us *groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies*, that is, the full manifestation of the sanctifying action of God.

But who is the Holy Spirit? How does He act? How can we better prepare ourselves to receive Him? These questions find a clear response in Christian doctrine. "The Holy Spirit, in effect, is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son: 'with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.'...The Holy Spirit is at work

with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the plan for our salvation." He is the infinite Love between the Father and the Son, the eternal Gift that they give to each other, the Bond uniting the Holy Trinity.

When we think of God, we find it easy to direct ourselves to the Father and the Son, who make Themselves more accessible through our own experiences of human paternity and filiation. Moreover, in the Gospels we have many accounts referring to the earthly life of the Son. It is more difficult, however, to have an idea of the Holy Spirit. Still, it is a necessity for us. St. Josemaria used to say that "the action of the Holy Spirit can pass unnoticed, because God does not reveal to us his plans, and because man's sin clouds over the divine gifts. But faith reminds us that God is always acting. He has created us and maintains us in existence and he

leads all creation by his grace toward the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8, 21).

In reality, the Paraclete is little known among Christians, because they lack the desire to deal with Him and to spread to others His great love for us. For this reason, the Founder of Opus Dei called Him the *Great Unknown*. But it does not have to be that way. God the Father has been so good, that not satisfied with giving us his Son Jesus, the Word incarnate, He has also given us the Holy Spirit. Since our Baptism, God one and three, dwells in our souls through sanctifying grace. By this sanctifying grace we call ourselves and truly are sons of God. Dear brothers and sisters, let us decide to seek the Holy Spirit in the depths of our souls, to speak with Him, to direct ourselves to Him in any situation. And thus, our everyday life will acquire greater

height and depth, and a supernatural meaning.

3. The liturgy of the Church is rich in symbols that allude to the Paraclete, which can help us to reflect on the Holy Spirit and His action in our souls. The sequence *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* that we pray in the Mass today and tomorrow, as well as the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus* that we sing during the ordination are full of these symbols. I would like to comment briefly on a few.

In its very first stanza, the *Sequence* speaks of the Holy Spirit as the *light* of the soul, calling for Him to send us from Heaven a *ray of his light*; and inviting us to invoke: *Oh most blessed light, fill the hearts of your faithful.* The *Sequence* contrasts the light with the darkness. It is a fact of life: a world without light would be a dead world. The Spirit dispels the darkness of sin, reminds us of the

teachings of Christ, and helps us to deepen our knowledge of these teachings. The Holy Spirit shows us the beauty of our Father God and makes us aspire to heavenly goods. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "through his grace, the Holy Spirit is the first to awaken faith in us and to communicate to us the new life, which is to 'know the Father and the one whom he has sent, Jesus Christ.'"

Together with the priesthood, the Paraclete will give to you deacons, my sons, the power to teach the truths of the Faith and of Christian morality with authority. You will be His instruments to enlighten souls and to answer the questions that often trouble hearts: the meaning of suffering, of life and death; the immense love of God the Father for all his creatures; the inseparable duties of justice and charity towards all people. Keep in mind the teaching

of Saint Josemaria: "We priests should only speak about God. We will not speak about politics, or sociology, or topics that are inappropriate to our priestly work. In this way we will love the Holy Church and the Roman Pontiff."

The Holy Spirit is also compared to *water*, as we just heard in the Gospel reading. In the final and most solemn day of the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus proclaimed, "*If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive,*" comments Saint John.

In the sacrament of Penance, my sons, you will be able to wash away the stains of sin in souls, to forgive their sins in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ, owing to the

mercy of God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thank the Lord, as we all do, for this incredible gift which our merciful God has placed in our poor hands and try to make the most out this gift of His mercy. Following the example and advice of Saint Josemaria, dedicate many hours to the ministry of Confession. It is never time wasted; on the contrary, it is time very well spent, because there is no greater "business" than saving souls, than being in the state of grace.

In as much as He is Love, the Holy Spirit is compared to the *fire* that warms hearts and enkindles in them love for God and for their brothers and sisters. It was as fire that the Paraclete descended upon the Church on the day of Pentecost. He instills in us this love, above all by giving us Jesus in the Eucharistic Communion. The same Spirit who, descending upon the most holy

womb of Mary, made possible the incarnation of the Word now transubstantiates the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Most beloved deacons, when today the Paraclete descends upon you, He will impress upon your souls the priestly character, an indelible sign that will conform you to Christ the Eternal and High Priest. The Holy Spirit will confer upon you all the powers that our Lord has granted to his ministers. Among these powers, the most wonderful and fundamental for the life of the Church is the possibility of acting *in persona Christi Capitis*, that is, to act in the name and person of Christ during the Sacrifice of the Mass. With Saint Josemaria, I invite all of you to consider "the extraordinary importance and abundance of the Paraclete when the priest renews the sacrifice of Calvary by celebrating Mass on our altars." How thankful

we should be to God the Holy Spirit for this gift of love that is the Holy Eucharist!

Before concluding, I would like to recall another sign, which the Scriptures use to speak of the Holy Spirit: *wind*. Saint Luke refers to the *wind* at the beginning of the *Acts of the Apostles*, when he recounts that "when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." The effects of that divine intrusion were immediately felt. Peter and the other Apostles, having cast aside all their fears, went forth to announce courageously the Resurrection of Jesus, and they won for the Church a great number of people.

We should never forget this: although the difficulties in our

personal lives or in the apostolate may be great at times, greater still is the action of the Holy Spirit in the souls of those who follow his inspirations. We can overcome all obstacles with prayer, with the frequent reception of the sacraments, and with complete docility to the Paraclete.

4. I said at the beginning that we find ourselves in this Basilica as in that Upper Room of Jerusalem, gathered together around Mary. Let us ask Her to intercede maternally for the Holy Father and all Bishops, for the new priests, for their families, for all priests and for the entire People of God. I make my own the prayer of the Pope at an ordination ceremony a few weeks ago. Benedict XVI said: "Let us pray that in every parish and Christian community attention to vocations and to the formation of priests may increase. This formation begins in the family, continues in the

seminary, and it involves all who have at heart the salvation of souls."

May this urgent petition never be lacking in our daily prayers. This way, the Paraclete, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of priests, will inspire many holy priests of Christ in the Church. Amen.

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