



“A Priest Forever”

Homily from the Ordination of Father Victor Mena,
St. Francis of Assisi, Bend, 29 June 2017

In our diocesan prayer for vocations, Deacon Victor, we have asked the Father to “call forth” in the Holy Spirit “priests to bring comfort to the afflicted, pardon to the sinner, and peace to the dying.”

Today, before our eyes, our prayer is answered. In a few minutes I will ask God to confer on you “the *dignity* of the priesthood . . . that comes from the Apostles.” Let’s look ahead for a minute to the drama that is about to unfold.

It begins with prostration. As the rest of us kneel before God, *you alone* will lie face down before Him in a posture of complete surrender. As *we raise* our voices in Litany to the saints above, *you lower yourself*, rendering yourself defenseless against any claim which God’s Holy Will may make upon your future.

Your wordless gesture will “speak” to us who witness it: it will tell us that you hold back nothing from the God Who has given you everything—the same God Whom you trust to give you much more to come.

Then, suddenly, our singing will cease as you step into a moment you will remember for the rest of your life. You will kneel before me, an unworthy successor to the Apostles whom Jesus made priests at the Last Supper. I will lay my hands upon your head in silence as the Holy Spirit descends to make you a priest forever.

Then I will step back as all the priests present step forward to impose their hands on you too. Thus will they impress upon you—and upon all of us—your acceptance into the Brotherhood of the Breaking of the Bread.

Next your fellow priests will clothe you with priestly garments. No one else but a priest wears a chasuble, and he wears it only to celebrate Mass. So this beautiful vestment is a powerful marker, Deacon Victor: when you put it on, people *see* you differently. Dressed in this peculiar fashion, you unmistakably identify yourself with the great High Priest Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life in the Sacrifice of the Cross.

But your public clothing here today “says” something more. It “tells” us that you intend the life you live from this day forth to be *publicly recognizable* as the life of a priest of Jesus Christ. Therefore, whoever recognizes you for *who you are* can call upon you for *what you have to give*—namely, that ministry of grace which only priests can offer.

To a great extent the exercise of that ministry will be the work of your *hands*. For time after time you will extend your hands over bread and wine to call down upon them the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Time after time you will extend your hands over sinners to bring them forgiveness and peace. Time after time your hand will trace over the forehead of the dying the oil of the sick in the form of the Cross.

Therefore, Deacon Victor, the Church commissions me to *anoint* your hands this day with the sacred chrism of the Holy Spirit, so that you may truly take the Body of Jesus in hand whenever you speak those sacred words of His that bring the Living Bread down from heaven for you to hand over to your brothers and sisters in Communion.

The Church in the Diocese of Baker has prayed fervently for you, Deacon Victor, and with your ordination today our prayer has been answered—but not completely. For we have been praying not just for your *ordination* but for your *vocation*. And your vocation to the priesthood does not terminate with ordination. It is a work still in progress until the last breath you take.

So our prayer for vocations will continue to be answered every time you “sympathize with our weakness and deal gently with the wayward,” every time you give us “confidence to draw near to the font of Mercy and find grace in time of need.”

Yes, we will go on praying for your vocation, Deacon Victor; for we know the Lord will never cease to call you to be more and more the priest you are about to become.