

Priesthood Ordination 2018

**Homily (Part II) of Most Reverend John O. Barres, STD,
JCL**

June 23, 2018

Deacon Leo Song, I want to congratulate you, your parents, your extended family, your friends, your pastors, your brother priests, your Vocation Director Father Joseph Fitzgerald and his predecessors Msgr. Tom Coogan and Fr. Brian Barr.

I want to congratulate Bishop William Murphy who, with his joy of the Gospel, his global missionary perspective, and his love for the priesthood has guided and mentored you throughout your formation.

We are grateful for the presence of your North American College formator and spiritual director Msgr. Joseph Chapel, your mentor at Theological College and the Catholic University of America, Fr. Mel Blanchette, and every inspirational Catholic priest, deacon, consecrated religious and lay person who has influenced you on the path to the priesthood.

Deacon Leo, the gift of your priesthood has providentially emerged from the love and sacrifices you have experienced in your family. In the words of Pope Francis, your parents Han and Lin and your sister Jina, and your beautiful extended family have transformed the world and history by joyfully forming and supporting you, and offering the gift of your priesthood to the Church and to the World today – this day of your ordination to the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Today, the Catholic Church in Korea rejoices. The Church in the United States rejoices. And Fr. Leo, you will be an inspirational expression of the ecclesial bonds that exist between them.

Your ordination to the priesthood occurs in a particular moment of Church history with its particular signs of the times.

What are some of these signs and how do they inspire the unfolding of your consecration and mission as a priest?

Yesterday, we celebrated the memorials of the English martyrs, St. Thomas More, the patron of statesmen, politicians and lawyers, and St. John Fisher, the courageous Churchman. In a public square that has lost sight of its moorings in religious liberty, these two saints are particularly instructive.

As we prepare to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Pope St. John Paul's encyclical *The Splendor of Truth* (1993) on August 6, 2018, we remember his analysis of the significance of martyrs like St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher in Church history and in World history.

He writes: “Martyrdom is an outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church. Fidelity to God’s holy law, witnessed to by death, is a solemn proclamation and missionary commitment *usque ad sanguinem*, so that the splendor of moral truth may be undimmed in the behavior and thinking of individuals and society. This witness makes an extraordinarily valuable contribution to warding off, in civil society and within the ecclesial communities themselves, a headlong plunge into the most dangerous crisis which can afflict man: the confusion between good and evil, which makes it impossible to build up and to preserve the moral order of individuals and communities. By their eloquent and attractive example of a life completely transfigured by the splendor of moral truth, the martyrs and, in general, all the Church’s Saints, light up every period of history by reawakening its moral sense.” (93)

The martyrs teach us how to die to ourselves and rise in the sacrifices and self-denial of the Cross. The martyrs teach priests and lay people of every age to be faithful to the Church’s moral teaching, a teaching that liberates all of humanity and is an expression of the Divine Mercy – especially when the surrounding culture rejects it and is hostile to it.

As St. Thomas More said from the executioner’s block: “I die the King’s good servant, but God’s first...God’s first.”

Deacon Leo, on July 25, 2018 we will commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and on October 14, 2018 we will celebrate with Pope Francis the canonization of Blessed Pope Paul VI in

St. Peter's Square at the time of a *Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*.

Together we celebrate the rich panorama of his witness and Pontificate from his leadership at the Second Vatican Council to his emphasis on Third World development in *Populorum Progressio* (1967) to his vision of evangelization, so influential on Pope Francis' own vision, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) to his theology and spirituality of the Eucharist in *Mysterium Ecclesiae* (1973) to his rich prophetic teaching about Marriage and the Family in *Humanae Vitae* (1968) which is expressed so inspirationally in the mission of the Gianna Center of Long Island for Women's Health and Fertility.

Deacon Leo, on this the day of your Ordination to the priesthood, take soon to be Pope St. Paul VI as an intercessor for your priestly holiness and integrate his prophetic teaching into your pastoral charity as a parish priest.

On October 14, 2018, we will also celebrate the canonization of the great martyr from El Salvador, Blessed Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. We ask his intercession today for all world refugees, for non-documented families at the border, and for a consistent comprehensive immigration reform grounded in the principles of the sanctity of human life, the unity of the family and the dignity of the human person, and, of course, grounded upon the genealogies of every American.

While living in another time, place and region of the world, Oscar Romero is a brother martyr of Thomas More and John Fisher. It was while offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that Archbishop Romero made the holy sacrifice of his life for Christ, the Church's mission and the People of God of that moment and every subsequent moment in Church history.

He witnessed to the sufferings of Christ. He received the unfading crown of glory. And he heeded Our Lord's call to feed Our Lord's sheep. His life and holiness are rays of light shining forth from today's Scripture passages.

Deacon Leo, on this the day of your Ordination to the priesthood, take soon to be Archbishop St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero as an intercessor for your priestly holiness and integrate his courage in defending human rights and the poor into your pastoral charity as a parish priest.

And of course, call on all the great Popes and priest saints of history.

St. John Vianney, pray for us!

St. John Neumann, pray for us!

Pope St. John XXIII, pray for us!

Blessed Pope Paul VI, pray for us!

Pope St. John Paul II, pray for us!

Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero, pray for us!