

Episcopal Ordination of Bishop-elect Richard Henning

St. Agnes Cathedral

Homily of Most Reverend John O. Barres

July 24, 2018

Bishop-elect Henning, as a son of Oak Island, the Atlantic Ocean and the natural beauty of Long Island, as a son of a dedicated Firefighter, as a son of the Sacred Scriptures and a contemporary Biblical Scholar formed in the Narrative Method at both the Catholic University of America in Washington DC and the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas in Rome, as a son of the missionary history of the Catholic Church on Long Island and in a special way as an adopted son of the Catholic Hispanic community of Long Island, the Holy Spirit has providentially brought you and your life narrative to this moment of episcopal ordination as a Successor of the Apostles.

Your deep and generous Encounter with the Risen Christ during the course of your life has opened you to a rich panorama of missionary Encounters with a wide variety of different types of people and forged in you a deep Good Samaritan commitment to the poor and the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Your pastoral sensitivity, your pastoral artistry, your pastoral charity and your pastoral creativity are a great inspiration to all of us.

Bishop-elect Henning, you have chosen as your episcopal motto a line from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 5, Verse 4: “Duc in Altum”; “Put out into the Deep.”

Since the very beginning, you have been putting out into the Deep of Long Island both as a little boy apprenticed in the art of motor-boating, as a student

at Chaminade, as an historian at St. John's University, as a seminarian at Immaculate Conception Seminary, and as a dedicated parish priest, biblical scholar and formator.

For a substantial period of your adult life, you marinated in the texts of Sacred Scripture, in Hebrew and Greek, and in the vast panorama of Catholic Biblical Scholarship and your experience of Catholic Biblical scholarship has always been focused on your Encounter with Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life and his missionary Church.

You were willing to go through the Fire and the Winepress of this experience and the Holy Spirit had you emerge from it ready, as the son of a Firefighter, to be a bold and skilled missionary Fire Stoker and Fire Thrower who ignites passionately the biblical and liturgical fires of *dramatic missionary growth* on Long Island and beyond.

Just as you studied and analyzed in your doctoral dissertation the Christological content of the speeches of St. Peter and St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles and chose one of Paul's speeches from Acts 28 for the second reading today, so now on this day of your episcopal Ordination you are called to follow in their footsteps as a Successor of the Apostles.

Bishop-elect Henning, your duty to teach as a Successor of the Apostle has a particular focus through your training and expertise in the Sacred Scriptures.

What Cardinal Carlo Martini did in in the Duomo in Milan and what Cardinal Collins continues to do in the Cathedral in Toronto, you are called to do throughout Long Island – teach the Sacred Scriptures and a contemplative and missionary *lectio divina* over the inspired texts, and inspire the People of God and in a special way our young people to study, love, contemplate and live the inspired Sacred Scriptures so that the Scriptures might be a Light and Lamp for their lives on their pilgrimage to Eternal Life.

As we celebrate your Ordination as a Bishop today, we also prepare to commemorate and celebrate tomorrow, July 25, 2018, the 50th Anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI's prophetic encyclical *Humanae Vitae/On Human Life*.

Humanae Vitae speaks to the Culture of Encounter married couples experience with the Risen Christ and with each other, a Culture of Encounter that leads to a radiant intimacy expressed in a fidelity to the truths of our Catholic moral teaching which set them free as a couple and a family to, in the words of Pope Francis, “transform the World and History” with the missionary fire of Christ’s love.

Pope Francis will canonize Pope Blessed Paul VI on October 14, 2018. Pope Francis frequently quotes Pope Paul and references his *Humanae Vitae* teaching. The Holy Father has identified a “social and spiritual crisis” so severe that “never before has proclaiming the Gospel on the Family ... been more urgent and necessary.”¹ The Pope has said: “The defense of the environment and the fight against exclusion demand that we recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, one which includes the natural difference between man and woman, and absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions.”²

In 2015, at a meeting with families in Manila, Pope Francis said: “I think of Blessed Paul VI. At a time when the problem of population growth was being raised, he had the courage to defend openness to life in families. He ... looked at the peoples of the earth and he saw this threat of families being destroyed for lack of children. Paul VI was courageous; he was a good pastor and he warned his flock of the wolves who were coming ... Our world needs good and strong families to overcome these threats! ... Every threat to the family is a threat to society itself. The future of humanity, as Saint John Paul II often said, passes through the family ... Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death.”³

As your Shepherd and Successor of the Apostles on Long Island, it is a great joy to celebrate with all of you today the Ordination of Bishop-elect Richard Garth Henning, the upcoming October 14, 2018 Canonization of Blessed Pope Paul VI and Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero, and the July 25, 2018 50th anniversary of Blessed Pope Paul VI’s prophetic teaching on marriage and the family expressed in *Humanae Vitae*.

¹ Synod of Bishops, *Preparatory Document for the IIIrd Extraordinary General Assembly*, “Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization”, 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-assemblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html.

² Ibid., cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 155, 123, 136.

³ Ibid.

With Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio representing our Holy Father Pope Francis today, with our Metropolitan Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan, with Bishop Nicholas DeMarzio of the Diocese of Brooklyn, with Archbishop William Lori of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, with Bishop Robert Guglielmo now of the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina, with Bishop Nelson Perez now of the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio and with the Bishops from New York and other Bishops from around the country, with Bishop Murphy who did so much to help form Bishop-elect Henning, with Bishop Brennan, Bishop Andrzej, Bishop Coyle, Bishop Dunne, Bishop Wcela, and all the People of God on Long Island and beyond, we give thanks for the Gift of the Holy Spirit and the Gift of Pope Francis of Richard Garth Henning becoming a Successor of the Apostles and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

Bishop-elect Henning, our prayers are with you as you embrace this new ecclesial mission and as you *put out into the deep* of the New Evangelization at this historic new moment for the Catholic Church on Long Island and the Universal Church.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!

Blessed Pope Paul VI, pray for us!

Blessed Archbishop Oscar Romero, pray for us!