

Priesthood Ordination
Gregory Hammes, Chris Rossman and Richard Warznak
Ascension of Our Lord Church; Overland Park
May 26, 2007

Praise Be Jesus Christ, now and forever! Amen! Today, we have so many reasons to give thanks as the Catholic community of Northeastern Kansas.

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Greg, Chris and Rich, you are being anointed this morning, you are being consecrated, to be used by the Lord to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, to comfort all who mourn. That is quite a job description! This is quite an undertaking! How is this possible?

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You **will not be** heralds of hope by giving trite answers or pat solutions to complex problems and great human needs. You **will be** heralds of hope by simply being who and what you say you are as priests by the promises you make today.

The Church, in the Ordination Rite is asking you to stake your entire life on Jesus Christ and the truth of His death and resurrection. You are called to live a life that makes absolutely no sense unless what we celebrate and touch at each celebration of the Eucharist is true: namely that the Son of God took upon Himself our humanity, that he poured out His life on Calvary in order that we might know the depth of His Father's love for us and be able to receive His mercy, that He rose on the Third Day vanquishing death forever and promising us, through the waters of baptism, a share in His life –eternal life.

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Your life is not meant to draw others to you but to point others to Jesus Christ. Your ministry is not about getting others to believe that you are some guru or sage but to bring others to Jesus Christ who can indeed bring glad tidings to the lowly, heal the broken-hearted, give liberty to captives and comfort those who mourn!

This brings me to my second point. The priesthood is not about you or me; it is all about Jesus Christ. For the Gospel this morning, you chose that beautiful passage from the end of St. John's Gospel. The Risen Jesus gives Peter an opportunity to reverse his threefold denial by making a threefold profession of his love for Jesus.

The Apostle Peter is such a great comfort to us because we see in his frailty and weakness a reflection of our own. Peter the impulsive, Peter the braggart, Peter the know it all who tries to talk Jesus out of fulfilling his mission, Peter the coward gives us points of identification with our own humanity. We can identify with Peter at the beginning of his call to follow Jesus when he falls at the feet of Jesus and says: **“Leave me Lord for I am a sinful man!”**

Peter made many mistakes. He got a lot of things wrong. Yet, he got the most important thing right. He knew who Jesus was and he knew who he was in relationship to Jesus. His confidence was not in himself but in Jesus. He could walk on water when he kept his gaze fixed on Jesus. Though he denied Jesus and abandoned Jesus on Good Friday, he could run to the tomb on Easter morning so sure was he of Jesus' love for him even in his weakness.

Greg, Chris and Rich keep your gaze on Jesus. Do not become preoccupied with your weaknesses, limitations and failures. Jesus knows that you, like Peter, are sinful men, but he has called you, like Peter, to be a fisher of men.

In a few moments, I will ask you if you are resolved **“to be united more closely every day to Christ the High Priest ... and with Him to consecrate yourself to God for the salvation of all.”** Strive every day to draw closer to Jesus and to unite everything you do with Him and your priestly ministry will be incredibly fruitful.

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I need your help to fulfill my responsibilities to provide pastoral care for all the people of the Archdiocese. You join this band of brothers, who are the priests of the Archdiocese and who united with me, their bishop, have been called to lead this flock in the model of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

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On behalf of my brother priests, I welcome you to this presbyterate. We want to be a source of support and encouragement for you and we need your energy and your enthusiasm to renew and to strengthen us.