



## HOLY MASS WITH PRESBYTERAL ORDINATIONS

### **HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS LEO XIV**

Saint Peter's Basilica

Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Saturday, 31 May 2025

**[Multimedia]**

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Dear brothers and sisters,

Today is a day of great joy for the Church, for each of you, ordination candidates, for your families and friends and for your travelling companions during your years of formation. As the Rite of Ordination highlights in several passages, the relationship between what we are celebrating today and the People of God is fundamental. The depth, breadth and even duration of the divine joy that we now share are directly proportional to the bonds that exist and will grow between you, candidates, and the people from whom you hail, who you continue to be a part of and to whom you will be sent. I will linger on this aspect, bearing in mind that priests' identities are rooted in the union with Christ, the Eternal and High priest.

We are the People of God. The Second Vatican Council made this awareness clearer, almost anticipating a time in which affiliations would grow weaker, and the awareness of God more rarefied. You bear witness to the fact that God has not grown tired of bringing his children together, diverse though they may be, and of forming them into a dynamic unity. It is not an impulsive action, but rather the gentle breeze that restored hope to the prophet Elijah when he was in despair (cf. 1 Kings 19:12). God's joy is not loud, but it truly changes history and brings us closer to one another. An icon of this mystery is the Visitation, which the Church contemplates on the last day of May. The Magnificat, the song of a people visited by grace, emerges from the encounter between the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth.

The readings we have just read also help us interpret what is happening among us. Firstly, in the Gospel, Jesus does not appear crushed by his imminent death, nor by the bonds that were broken or left incomplete. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit strengthens these threatened bonds. In prayer, they become stronger than death. Instead of thinking about his own personal destiny, Jesus puts the bonds that he built 'down here' into the Father's hands. We are part of them! Indeed, the Gospel came to us through these relationships — bonds that the world can wear down, but not destroy.

Dear ordinands, imitate Jesus! Being of God — servants of God, people of God — connects us to the earth: not to an ideal world, but to the real one. Like Jesus, you meet real people whom the Father places on your path. Consecrate yourselves to them, without separating, isolating or turning the gift you received into a privilege. Pope Francis warned us about this many times because self-centredness extinguishes the fire of the missionary spirit.

The Church is outgoing like the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. In every Eucharist you make his words your own: it is "for you and for all". No-one has ever seen God. He turned to us; he came out of himself. The Son became the exegesis, the living story. And he gave us the power to become children of God. Do not seek, let us not seek, any other power!

May the gesture of laying on of the hands, with which Jesus welcomed children and healed the sick, renew the liberating power of his messianic ministry, within you. In the Acts of the Apostles, that gesture we will soon repeat is the invocation of the Spirit, creator. In this way, the Kingdom of God now unites your personal freedoms, that are ready to go beyond, engaging your intelligence and your youthful strength in the jubilee mission that Jesus entrusted to his Church.

In his greeting to the elders of the community of Ephesus, which we heard in the First Reading, Paul conveys the secret of every mission: "The Holy Spirit has made you guardians" (Acts 20:28). Not masters, but guardians. The mission is Jesus. He is Risen — thus, he is living and he precedes us. None of us is called to substitute him. The day of the Ascension teaches us about his invisible presence. He trusts us, he makes room for us; he even went so far as to say: "It is better for you that I go" (Jn 16:7). By involving you in the mission, dear ordinands, we bishops make room for you too. And you make room for the faithful and for every creature to whom the Risen One is close and in whom he loves to visit

and surprise us. The People of God are more numerous than we see. Let us not define their boundaries.

I would like to highlight another part of the passage from Saint Paul, from his moving farewell discourse. In fact it comes before all the other words. He can say, "You know how I lived among you the whole time" (Acts 20:18). Let us keep this expression clearly in our hearts and minds! "You know how I lived": the transparency of life. Lives that are known, legible lives, credible lives! We live among the People of God, so that we may stand before them as credible witnesses.

Together, then, we will rebuild the credibility of a wounded Church, sent to a wounded humanity, within a wounded creation. We are not yet perfect, but it is necessary that we be credible.

The Risen Jesus shows us his wounds and, although they are a sign of humanity's rejection, he forgives us and sends us on our way. Let us not forget this! He breathes on us today too. (cf. Jn 20:22), and he makes us ministers of hope. "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view" (2 Cor 5:16). Everything that seems lost and broken to us, now appears in the sign of reconciliation.

"For the love of Christ controls us", dear brothers and sisters! It is a 'control' that is liberating and enables us to not control anyone. To liberate, not to possess. We are God's. There is no greater wealth to be appreciated and shared. It is the only wealth that, when shared, is multiplied. Together we want to bring it to the world that God loved so much that he gave his only Son (cf. Jn 3:16).

Thus, the life given by these brothers, who will soon be ordained priests, is full of meaning. We thank them and we thank God who called them to the service of an all-priestly people. Indeed, together we bridge heaven and earth. This shared priesthood that lifts up the lowly, binds generations and allows us to be called blessed (cf. Lk 1:48, 52), (cf. Lk 1:48, 52), shines forth in Mary, Mother of the Church. May she, Our Lady of Trust and Mother of Hope, intercede for us.

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Osservatore Romano