



Pope Francis (archive photo (Vatican Media))



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Cooperation and service at heart of priestly ministry, says Pope.

In an address to deacons preparing for the priesthood in the diocese of Rome, Pope Francis highlights faithful cooperation, service to the People of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as key aspects of priestly ministry.

By Christopher Wells

In an address prepared for deacons preparing for priestly ordination, Pope Francis reflected on three aspects of priestly ministry highlighted in the rite of ordination: faithful cooperation with the bishop, service to the people of God, and guidance by the Holy Spirit.

Although a scheduled meeting was postponed on account of the Pope's health, the Holy Father's remarks were published on Saturday by the Holy See Press Office.

Faithful cooperators

Pope Francis reminded them, first of all, that the Church does not ask them primarily to be leaders, but to be cooperators with the bishops. Priests, he said, are called to be witnesses to the "mystery of communion" that is the Church, especially through fraternity, fidelity, and docility.

In short, he said, priests are meant to be members of a choir, "not soloists"; brothers in the presbyterate and priests for all, not only for a particular group.

Serving the people of God

The second aspect of priestly ministry, the Pope said, is service to God's people. He noted that the priesthood is rooted in the diaconate, which does not cease after priestly ordination. Priests, he said, are called to be conformed to Jesus, who "did not come to be served, but to serve."

This service, he continued, cannot be an abstraction, but must be concrete: "To serve means to be available, to renounce living according to one's own agenda, to be ready for God's surprise... it is a constant attitude of acceptance, compassion and tenderness."

Guidance by the Holy Spirit

Finally, Pope Francis insisted that priests must always give "primacy" to the Holy Spirit, who will descend upon them. "If this happens," he said, "your life... will be oriented to the Lord and by the Lord, and you will truly be 'men of God'."

This comes through a "daily anointing" from Jesus "when we stand in His presence, when we worship Him, when we are intimate with His Word." And this, in turn, the Pope said, "enables us to intercede before Him for the Holy People of God, for humanity, for the people we meet each day."

Pope Francis concluded his remarks by thanking Rome's transitional deacons for their "yes" to God and asking them to pray for him every day.

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24 February 2024, 12:01