

Homily by Most Rev. Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C., Bishop of Peoria, Illinois

Given during Vespers at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Pensacola FL, the evening before the ordination/installation of Bishop William A. Wack, C.S.C.

August 21, 2017

A long time ago, a long, long time ago, a very, very long time ago when I was a young and skinny priest, happily serving at the University of Notre Dame, among my responsibilities was to teach a course entitled, Faith Traditions. Now if you think Catholicism is hierarchical, I'm here to tell you when it comes to uncompromising structures of rank and precedence, the Holy Roman Catholic Church, can't hold a candle to Academe, to the governing culture of University life. There advanced degrees and recognized research, constitute the established pecking order. Well at Notre Dame, my rank couldn't have been any lower. I was officially designated as an Adjunct Part Time Assistant Instructor. Even the folks who cleaned the faculty bathrooms, may have enjoyed greater professional status than me. But perhaps my one claim to lasting academic fame, may be that among my students, from those now far distant years, was the very young William Wack, who at that time, was himself, a mere Postulant in the Congregation of Holy Cross. Now the course Faith Trads, was a requirement for those in the seminary, and included an introduction to the theology of Holy Orders. So Bill soon to be Your Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop William Albert Wack, my esteemed brother bishops, my reverend and dear brother priests, my fellow Holy Cross Religious, and especially the People of God from this truly wonderful Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, I am about to inflict upon you a very brief synopsis, of the immense richness, and profound meaning of ordained ministry, and more specifically on the ministry of bishops in the Catholic Church.

Remember first of all that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of our Confession. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Word Made Flesh. Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. Jesus is the Altar. Jesus is the Atoning Sacrifice. Jesus is the Redeemer and Sanctifier. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And through the grace of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, all the Faithful, are consecrated as a Holy Nation, a Royal Priesthood a People set apart. Through the grace of God, the entire Church constitutes the Body of Christ. We are all His members, and He is the Head. And through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Bishops and Priests, each according to their Order, are ordained to serve the common Priesthood of the Faithful.

Bill, by this time tomorrow, through by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See, you will be ordained a Bishop of the Church a Successor of the Holy Apostles. You would have less imagination than a Florida Ginkgo not to recognize that this will be a truly awesome moment of grace and a new beginning in your experience of ministry. You will share in what our Tradition

designates as the Fullness of the Priesthood. Through the Holy Spirit, Episcopal Consecration, will confer upon you the power and authority to Teach the Catholic Faith, to Sanctify and Shepherd this Local Church, entrusted to your care. It will be your great gift and privilege to ordain priests as co-workers with you, serving in the person of Christ the Head, and to ordain deacons to assist you in all the tasks of the Diaconate, as your hands and your heart, in the Church's corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be your responsibility to pastor the pastors, to serve as Spiritual Father to your lay ministers and Chief Shepherd to all the Faithful.

Now my dear Floridians, priests and deacons, religious and laity, I want you to know that you are getting a good man in the person of your new bishop. I've known him since he was a kid. He comes from a good Catholic family, from a good South Bend Indiana Catholic parish. He comes from Our Lady's University. He comes from the Congregation of Holy Cross. He's been a great priest and I believe he will be an even better bishop. Bishop Wack has a personality. He has energy. He has a gift for humor. He loves the Church. He loves the priesthood. He loves service, and he loves people, but best of all, he loves the Lord.

And Bishop Elect Wack you must realize that Divine Providence is placing you in Paradise. Heck, this is Florida. Bill grew up where it can snow from Thanksgiving until Easter, and where in winter, you might not even catch a glimpse of the sun for weeks on end. In this Diocese you have a spectacular climate. You have sparkling seas and gorgeous skies. And you have The Seminoles of Florida State, who nearly always win. Now admittedly back in 2014, when The Seminoles beat the Fighting Irish it was with the obvious help of a legally blind and entirely biased Ref from the Atlantic Coast Conference. I believe that Florida State awarded each and every one of his grandchildren free tuition. Not that I believe in holding any grudges. But Bill I do have a related bit of pastoral advice. Never ever schedule a Confirmation on the evening when the Seminoles play The Gators. Not only will your priests not show up, the parents and grandma and grandpa won't show up, the sponsors won't show up. Even the Confirmands won't show up.

Now every bishop here can tell you that exercising authority is not always easy. So get over any notion that you will always be able to make the right decision. Sometimes your choices will be, not between good or bad but between bad or badder. Perfection is called being in heaven. But you have been called by God and His Church, to be the Bishop, not of the New Jerusalem, but of Pensacola/Tallahassee. This may look like paradise, but as beautiful as it is, it is a Diocese with a human flock a human clergy, and you as a human bishop. When you make a mistake and you will make them, this will actually be a grace filled opportunity to cling even more closely, sometimes even desperately to your Lord, who loves you, who first called you to the religious life, who called you to the holy priesthood, and who now calls you here in this Presbyterate, in the mist of this Local Church, to be His Servant Bishop. Remember Saint John XXIII's great

insight, when he couldn't sleep after being elected Bishop of Rome: "OK God it's your Church. You take care of it."

Now the entire Catholic Church and this Diocese as well certainly loves honors and deeply reveres Our Blessed Lady. But the Congregation of Holy Cross, the religious family in which both Bill and I, are so blessed and privileged to be members, and where we made our religious profession of vows, is unashamedly even conspicuously Marian. The motto of the University from which we both graduated is: Vita Dulcedo et Spes Nostra, that is Our Life Our Sweetness, and Our Hope. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to believe in Jesus, the first to welcome the Lord into her life. Her great faith brought the Word Made Flesh, into this world and she became the first and greatest of His disciples. At Cana of Galilee she gave the best advice any Christian could ever hear, when she said to the attendants: Do whatever He tells you. She remained faithful even beneath the Cross, when the Lord gave her to the Disciple who loved and to all of us as our Blessed Mother in the journey of Faith. Mary was also there gathered in prayer with the Apostles, on Pentecost Sunday in the Upper Room, when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Church in tongues of holy fire and in astounding power. Bill tomorrow that same Holy Spirit will descend upon you and transform you into a true Successor of those Holy Apostles. At that moment may Our Lady also be united with you in prayer, as she was 2000 years ago with those first Apostles, and as you serve as a bishop, may she continue to pray with you and for you. In the wondrous Communion of Saints, trust always in the help of her prayers. And as Our Lady taught at the Wedding Banquet: try always in your ministry as Christ's bishop, to do whatever the Lord tells you. The rest is in the hands of God, who is never lacking in amazing grace, endless mercy and infinite love. May God bless you in your episcopal ministry, my Holy Cross brother, Bishop William Wack.

Most Rev. Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.