"IT IS THE DUTY OF THE PRIEST TO OFFER SACRIFICE
TO BLESS, TO RULE, TO PREACH AND TO BAPTIZE."

(WORDS TAKEN FROM THE CEREMONY OF
THE ORDINATION OF A PRIEST.)

The observance of an important cycle of service in the priestly ministry is always an occasion of extraordinary solemnity, joy and thanksgiving. These sentiments spring from the appreciation of the dignity, powers and responsibilities which by divine law and in the sacred tradition of the Church are inherent in the character of the priesthood.

There is always an air of solemnity when Christ conveys to His apostles the dignities and powers which constitute their sacred ministry. It is with supreme unction that He confers upon them the unspeakable power at the Last Supper to perpetuate to the end of time
His Eucharistic Presence and the invaluable benefits of His Sacrifice upon the Cross in the simple yet sublimely pregnant words: "Do this in remembrance of me".
(Luke XXII, 19)

Not without significance is the fact that the solemnity of the hour was concluded with a hymn of praise and the solemn vigil in the Garden of Gethsemani! No less impressive is the scene which Christ chose to entrust to His Apostles the power of forgiving sin. The day was the third after the tragic experiences of the Master's mock trials before Pilate, the Jewish High Priests and the frenzied rabble, the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the painful carrying of the Cross through the streets of Jerusalem, all "consummated" in the excruciating agony and death upon the Cross. The days that followed the entombment were marked by tension and suspense for the apostles not to speak of deep concern about the future. Lo, as the evening was setting in, the cenacle was filled with the radiance that emanated from the figure of the living Christ, once more standing in their midst. The silence was broken as their came from the Master's lips the beautiful greeting: "Peace be to you!!...."Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."
(John XX, 21-23)
We may even see in the Savior's Transfiguration a most majestic yet remote setting for the all-comprehensive power which Christ conferred upon His apostles in these solemn words recorded by St. Matthew in the eighteenth chapter of his Gospel: "Amen I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven."
(Matt. XVIII, 18)

Thus did our Lord impress upon His apostles the sublime character of the office which they were to possess and exercise, and their intimate participation in His own divine mission among the children of men. This latter prerogative was even more clearly expressed when in the late twilight hour of the day of His Resurrection He met them by appointment on a mountain in Galilee. Again it is St. Matthew who tells us that "Jesus drew near and spoke to them: 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."
(Matt. XXVIII, 18-20)

Truly, these are reassuring words, words that bear testimony of the universal power of the Incarnate Son of God, just risen from the dead;
words that convey a world-embracing mandate to make disciples of all nations by teaching them all truth; words that empower the apostolic priests to pour the cleansing grace-giving waters of Baptism over the souls of men and make them children of God; words that include the pledge of the abiding Presence and assistance of the Son of God to the end of time!

Truly, an utterance so solemn and majestic re-echoed through the hills of Galilee on that night of Christ's Resurrection, could not fail to convince His hearers of the magnitude of their mission; nor can it escape our conviction that the apostolic priest is in very truth the repository of a dignity and of powers that emanate from divine goodness and operate under divine inspiration.

Liturgically Holy Mother Church summarizes these manifold dignities, powers and duties of the priesthood briefly in the ceremonial of Ordination under the caption: "It is the duty of the priest to offer sacrifice, to bless, to preside or rule, to preach and to Baptize." The supreme prerogative of the priest is to be associated with Christ, the Eternal High Priest, in the august Sacrifice of the Mass. Here he exercises the power which Christ committed to His apostles at the Last Supper to perform the miracle of consecrating bread and wine into the
Body and Blood of Christ and shares with Christ, and in Christ and through Christ the renewal of the Sacrifice of Calvary and the re-application if its merits to the souls of men. Truly, it is in the Mass that the priest stands out pre-eminently in dignity and power as "another Christ", as a participant in the Eternal Priesthood of the Son of God, a "priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." (Hebrews, X, 6)

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass the priest is also the representative of the faithful, whose offerings and prayers he presents to the Eternal High Priest and through Him to the Heavenly Father in praise and thanksgiving, in atonement for sin and in humble petition for ever necessary new graces and blessings. Nor may we forget that it is through the consecrated hands of the priest, that the living Christ comes into the souls of men in Holy Communion as the pledge of eternal life.

Great is the reverence for the blessing of the priest. The ritual of the Church empowers him by the blessing of his consecrated hands to make sacred the articles of devotion which he blesses and enrich them with the power of inspiration, liberation from temporal punishment for sin. The well find strength and courage in the priestly blessing; the sick derive from it comfort, patience and submission to the Divine Will;
endless are the ways in which the blessing of the priest becomes the
fruitful source of good, spiritual and physical, moral and social,
temporal and eternal!

Not infrequently the authority of the priest to preside or rule is
challenged by unthinking or malevolent men, and yet it would have
seemed a serious oversight had not the Divine Master given to His
apostolic priests the assurances contained in solemn passages like the
following: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you," "He who
(John XX, 21)
hears you, hears me". "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound
(Luke X, 16)
also in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed also in
(Matt. XVIII, 18)
heaven."

Even the power of remitting or retaining sin involves judicial
authority which clearly pertains to the function of presiding or ruling.
While the priest's function of government applies primarily to matters
of the spirit, it comprehends many areas of temporal and material
administration.
"IT IS THE DUTY OF THE BISHOP TO JUDGE, TO INTERPRET, TO CONSECRATE, TO ORDAIN, TO OFFER, TO BAPTIZE AND TO CONFIRM."

Your Excellency, the Most Reverend Apostolic Delegate to the Holy Father to our country, Your Excellencies, the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops, the Right Reverend Abbots, the Superiors General, Right Reverend and Very Reverend Monsignori, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Religious Brothers and Sisters, distinguished Civil Representatives of Governments, Your Honor the Mayor and dearly beloved members of the laity!

By the grace of God, we are assembled today in this historic Cathedral of St. Louis, King of France, to present with becoming ceremony the Prelate, who has been recently appointed by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, the beloved Chief Shepherd of the Church, to the office of Coadjutor Archbishop to the Archbishop of New Orleans with the right of succession.
We consider it our first privilege and duty to extend a cordial greeting and warm welcome to His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate, Most Reverend Archbishop Egidio Vagnoszi, representative of His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, who is honoring the occasion by his gracious presence. We beg him to convey to His Holiness the pledge of our obedience, loyalty and affection, as well as our gratitude and admiration for the wisdom, paternal solicitude and fortitude with which he is guiding Holy Mother Church and her spiritual children and even the world at large in these critical times. May it please the Lord to continue to preserve him, give him increasing vitality and success in his arduous labors!

May we also offer a sincere word of welcome to the illustrious Archbishops and Bishops, the Right Reverend Abbots, the many Prelates, the religious Superiors and all the members of the Clergy, the Religious and the laity who are with us on this auspicious occasion. A special greeting is offered to the distinguished representatives of our own and other civil authorities whose presence we interpret as a manifestation of reverence and good will. May it please God to bless our assembly and to give a sympathetic hearing to our united prayers for the Church, our Country and the peace of the world.

The appointment of a Coadjutor Archbishop is a mark of paternal solicitude on the part of the Holy Father for the administrative welfare
of the Church, represented in this instance by the Archdiocese of New Orleans. It is a recognition of the frailty of human life in the contingency of advancing years and a guarantee that the welfare of souls will not be jeopardized by any possible interruption of the shepherding care to which the flock of Christ is at all times and under all circumstances entitled. This shepherding care rests chiefly upon the Bishop or Archbishop whom the Holy Father, as the Supreme Shepherd, appoints to rule the diocese. This shepherding care is outlined in detail in the solemn ceremony of episcopal consecration. In the words of our text: "It is the duty of the Bishop to Judge, to Interpret, to Consecrate, to Ordain, to Offer, to Baptize, and to Confirm".

In other words the Bishop is pre-eminently a teacher of the truth, the truth of which Christ states it "shall make you free". The Bishop is called upon not only to teach the truth but also to interpret it according to the understanding of his flock, to express judgment on the manner in which God's law is observed, to correct error in human teaching and the human way of life. It is his high privilege and responsibility to give inspiration and encouragement to the observance of God's precepts, to correct abuses and to secure the dignity of human
life, thus to promote peace, order and happiness in time as a worthy preparation for the triumphal glory of heaven.

In the wise dispensation of Divine Providence, the Bishop is also endowed with marvelous spiritual powers. On the positive side, the Bishop has the power to offer Sacrifice, the power to dedicate and Consecrate persons and objects to the service of God through the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and other sublime functions, according to the liturgy of the Church.

For more than nineteen hundred years has the world witnessed the application of these powers by Bishops in the exercise of their sacred ministry. Through this ministry human life has been enabled and edified, Christian civilization has been created, established and promoted to the utmost bounds of the earth.

May these sentiments enable us to interpret and appreciate the solemn function of this day, as we welcome into our midst a Prelate, who has already given evidence of great episcopal zeal and fruitfulness by his participation in the administration of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.
and in his successful administration of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, both located in the very center of our country.

We rejoice in the prospect of the aid which he will give to our own administrative efforts and in the consoling thought that, when our responsibility ends, the progress of religion will go on with ever increasing effectiveness to the edification of our devoted Catholic people.

To the realization of these anticipations, we solicit your united prayers, the prayers of the Clergy, the Religious and the laity, especially the prayers of our devoted children.