



REMARKS OF AUXILIARY BISHOP ROBERT EVANS  
EPISCOPAL ORDINATION – DECEMBER 15, 2009

“PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST!”

“(A) simple, humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord. The fact that the Lord can work and act even with insufficient means consoles me and above all I entrust myself to your prayers.”

My brothers and sisters in the Lord: May I make so bold as to appropriate these words of Pope Benedict XVI, which he spoke upon his election as Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church? With a keen sense of my own inadequacy but trusting in Divine Providence, I stand before you to ask your continued prayers and support as I begin my pastoral ministry in a new corner of the Lord’s vineyard. I have been privileged to do the work of the Lord, no doubt not always as faithfully or humbly as I should, in differing parts of this vineyard: in several Rhode Island communities, in Rome and in Washington, whether in parish ministry or in central administration or in priestly formation or in clergy continuing education or in the service of the Holy See. I have welcomed each of these as an invitation of the Lord, expressed through my superiors, to help build the Kingdom, using whatever meager talents and abilities I possess, aware that as a steward I must make a faithful accounting.

I wish to acknowledge publicly my continued loyalty to and renewed affection for Our Holy Father, who is Peter in our midst and who in God’s mysterious design has called me to this new responsibility. Peter, in Benedict, has answered for me that question originally posed by him two millennia ago: “Quo vadis?” I am particularly humbled that this appointment has come during what Pope Benedict has declared as “The Year for Priests,” the theme of which is “Faithfulness of Christ, faithfulness of priests.” As the Holy Father has said, “(I)t is important not to forget that one of the Bishop’s essential tasks is, precisely, to help priests—by his example and his brotherly support—to follow their vocation faithfully and to work with enthusiasm and love in the Lord’s vineyard” (Address to Bishops, September 21, 2009).

I am most grateful to Bishop Tobin for his fraternal support. Although there is an anchor on my coat-of-arms, I trust that I will not prove to be a weight around his neck. (But if I prove to be so, he can always send me to Block Island, and I won’t object!) To him I pledge anew that same promise of respect and obedience made to my bishop and his successors many years ago on the day of my priestly ordination in Rome at the Altar of the Chair in Saint Peter’s Basilica.

Andre Frossard, a French journalist who had converted to Catholicism from atheism, shortly after the election of the Polish Pope, John Paul II, seeing his early dramatic gestures and unambiguous witness to hope, wired back to his Parisian newspaper: “This is not a Pope from Poland; this is a Pope from Galilee.” Bishop Tobin, by your courageous leadership and heroic witness, you have shown yourself to be not so much a priest from Pittsburgh or a Bishop from Youngstown or even the Bishop of Providence; you are indeed an Apostle from Galilee!

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I wish to echo Bishop Tobin's warm greeting to one and all, especially to my brother bishops and consecrators assembled in prayer; some I have known as friends, all I have been proud to admire. I thank my many priest friends who over the years have been an example of zeal and fidelity as well as a source of inspiration and comfort; first and last, I remain a priest of the Lord, not through any merit of my own and surely not as a career choice. I believe that each and every priest can witness to the Lord's own words that we have not so much chosen Him as He has chosen us. Of course, this does not discount the theory that the Lord does have a wicked sense of humor.

I wish to thank my small but loving family for their support over these many years. Above all, I wish to acknowledge my mother's example of many years of hard work and sacrifice, but without complaint and always with a sense of humor. If I have inherited these traits from her, then I know that I will do her proud. I wish to thank my many friends whom I have come to know in my various assignments, so many who are present today.

Finally, I stand before you, a kid from Federal Hill, who learned early in life to love Holy Mother the Church and her priests, and who has never waived in that first and foremost love. I promise to do my best in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord with the tools God has provided. If I am not up to the task, the fault is mine and I ask your forgiveness. Above all, I ask your prayers and your collaboration in the unfinished work of tending the Lord's vineyard by promoting a culture of life in order to build a civilization of love. God bless and watch over you always.