



## **From a Bishop's Journal (728)**

### **Congratulations, Father Gilbert!**

**O**n Friday, December 7, in the church of St. Mary of the Angels in Perth-Andover, I had the joy of ordaining Gilbert Doddatto, a member of the Voluntas Dei Institute, to the priesthood. Gilbert is a member of the pastoral team ministering at St. Patrick's in Limestone Siding, Our Lady of Mercy in Aroostook, St. Mary of the Angels in Perth-Andover, and St. Ann at Tobique First Nation. As the Institute founded by Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. is celebrating its golden jubilee in 2008, the ordination took on the colour of that anniversary's first celebration. I must also say that Voluntas Dei members have been working in our diocese for forty-five years. Father Leo Grégoire has been working among us for over thirty-six years! Four other Voluntas Deis also work here: Father Roland Poitras, Father Whalen Bossé, Father Gilbert Doddatto, and pastoral intern Andrew Mayer. What follows are excerpts from the homily I gave at the ordination.

#### **A Path to Holiness**

In preparing this ordination, I read with great interest the Constitutions of the Voluntas Dei Institute, and I found there a path to holiness, for all its members, for all the priests and single laymen and couples and of your Institute. Your beloved founder wrote: "We are aware of having been called by Jesus himself to live a special lifestyle: to be consecrated persons immersed in the midst of the world, revealing Christ with the means of the world. As Christ allows himself to be guided by the wills of his Father, so do we let ourselves be directed by the wills of the Son." And Father Parent concluded: "For a Voluntas Dei, there is no other manner of accepting than Mary's way. Like her, we shall accompany Jesus in all of life's situations... God wants to rapidly make saints of us."

#### **The Priestly Call**

Dear Gilbert, through your Director General, God's will is revealed to you: you are called to the priesthood; you have to continue to be saint! "Almighty Father, grant this servant the dignity of the priesthood. Renew in him the spirit of holiness." In the light of the Word of God and especially the Beatitudes of Jesus, the priest must be passionately fond of Christ and his Church, fond of his word, fond of his Eucharist, fond of his mother Mary and fond of the people of God.

## **Do You Love Christ?**

Before giving him the charge of his flock, Jesus asked Peter three times whether he really loved him. And today I ask you the same question: “Gilbert, do you love Christ Jesus more than these?” You are to cherish the love of Jesus. “As a co-worker with the order of Bishops, may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct.”

## **A Passionate Person**

The priest is someone who is passionately in love with Christ, and ready to give up his life to proclaim the Good News of salvation. Gilbert, you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. More than any other disciple of Jesus, the priest must be a passionate lover of God’s Word. He owes it to himself to welcome it in his heart so as to proclaim it before the assembly. Like the Virgin Mary, he must welcome the Word made flesh, to present it to the people today.

## **Passionate for the Eucharist**

Passionately fond of Christ and of God’s Word, the priest must also become more and more passionately fond of the Eucharist. Following the example of Jesus who gave his life for his friends, who gave his body for humankind and shed his blood for the glory of God and the salvation of the world, the priest is called to give himself entirely to those confided to his care. His being passionately fond of the Eucharist is translated into his constant thanksgiving for the gifts of God. “Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate, model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s cross.”

## **Passionate for the People of God**

Dear Gilbert, love the people of God, love it passionately. “May he be faithful in working with the order of Bishops, so that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth, and the family of nations, made one in Christ, may become God’s one, holy people. You know, dear Gilbert, the charism of the Voluntas Dei Institute is formulated as follows: To be, in the manner of the Virgin of the Annunciation, the instrument of Christ carrying out the will of the Father, in the reality of the present moment, in the midst of the world, where Christ has his rights.

## **Prayer of Ordination**

“Draw near, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, author of human dignity, who apportion all graces. Through you everything progresses and all things are held secure. To form a priestly people you appoint ministers of Christ your Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, arranging them in different orders... Almighty Father, grant, we pray, to this your servant the dignity of the priesthood; renew deep within him the Spirit of holiness; may he hold fast to this office, next in rank to our own, which he receives from you, O God, and by his manner of life may he be an example of right

conduct.” May the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Father consecrated by the Holy Spirit and filled with His power, strengthen you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer to God the Eucharistic sacrifice!

Father Gilbert, may your ministry bring you much happiness, and may you be the source of great joy to God’s people all the days of your life! Congratulations, and may you enjoy a fruitful ministry.

*+ François Thibodeau*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

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