

Homily – Institution of Lectors and Acolytes Assumption Seminary – October 16, 2021

The Letter to the Romans is showing us how the old covenant is a preface to the new covenant. The old law mandates minimum standards, while the new commandment demands from us the same love for one another which we have received from the Lord. The “righteousness that comes from faith” is God’s mercy at work within his People. Its face is the Son of God incarnate. Nothing else could have allowed Abraham to believe “hoping against hope.” In John’s Gospel we read: “‘Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.’ ... ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.’” (8:56.58). God’s Word, fully revealed in Jesus, finally shows that God’s justice and mercy are one and the same. He had walked along with the People the whole time. We are never alone! Merciful justice is no human accomplishment, but God’s very own self-giving nature, Who expresses Himself through the Holy Spirit.

Pope John Paul I – whose beatification was authorized a few days ago by Pope Francis – said that faith “is not just a question of believing in the things that God revealed, but in Him who deserves our faith, who has loved us so much and done so much for our sake.” The One “who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist” is the same One who has called you from among his People to serve the same People in His name. His call for you is no different from Abraham’s in the sense that his expectation from you is not merely that you fulfill human justice, but that you believe and become the Word that you proclaim, and the gift that you help prepare and distribute.

When we truly listen, our attention is focused on the message, not so much on the messenger. As lectors, you are called to be imitators of

the Holy Spirit, the Voice who speaks God's Word to the heart, as it were. Do not "worry about how or what" you will say, "For the Holy Spirit will teach you." (Lk).

As acolytes, you are called to imitate the faith of Abraham, believing in the One who takes the place of Isaac, Himself becoming the victim for the priestly offering, the One who transubstantiates the gifts into Himself, who is the Word, "who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist." You are to become the altar that you serve, the gifts which you help prepare, one with the Priestly People. Believing and hoping against hope, you must make gifts of yourselves, so that God's Gift unites you to Himself in his offering to the Father for the salvation of his People. As you carry out this ministry bestowed upon you today, you look forward to becoming priests. You must also look forward to becoming one with the victim and the altar.

Pope Francis has said that: "The Spirit of the Lord Jesus, the perennial source of the Church's life and mission, distributes to the members of the People of God the gifts that enable each one, in a different way, to contribute to the edification of the Church and to the proclamation of the Gospel." Acknowledging our Lord Jesus Christ before others is not merely lawful, but righteous, bearing witness that the faith in God's Gift is already transforming us into God's very own gift of self. Be witnesses of the Word which you proclaim and the Gift of the Body of Christ, a part of which you became through Baptism and which you now serve for the nourishment of yourselves and the rest of the Body, the Church.

Nourished by the Word, the Body and Blood of the Son, and filled with the Holy Spirit, may the most blessed Mother of God, Our Lady of

Guadalupe, every day help you become more and more united to the eternal offering to the Father.