

## **Ordinary 28b: Sunday**

### **Installation of Father Kurudeepan, OMI**

St. Paul's Church, North Vancouver

14 October 2018

Dear Father Tap, Deacon Rennie, dear Sisters, Elders, and dear friends in Christ of the St. Paul's parish community:

#### ***Introduction***

As always on the Day of the Lord, today this community of faith at St. Paul's gathers to give thanks and praise to God by offering the Eucharist. But we are also celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood of Father Tap, your pastor. To mark this very special occasion, we are also going to witness what is called his "formal installation" as your shepherd.

In point of fact this ceremony should have taken place a year ago, but that it coincides with Father's Ordination anniversary turns out to be a blessing. For this morning, he will renew his priestly promises before you, the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care. Then together we shall take a little walk around the church – a pilgrimage of sorts – which points out the various ways he accompanies you from the re-birth of Baptism to the birth, at death, into eternal life.

But before doing that, and before a reflection on the Gospel, it is helpful to review just what are the responsibilities of a pastor of a

community of faith. What can you hold him accountable for? Or, perhaps even more importantly, what does the good Lord expect from Father Tap's ministry with you?

As pastor, then, Father Tap is called, as he was forty years ago, to celebrate faithfully with you and for you the Church's Sacraments, above all by offering Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Every priest is a man of the Sacraments, those grace-filled celebrations in which Jesus Christ becomes present: cleansing, forgiving, nourishing, strengthening, and healing his people.

But he is also to proclaim to you forcefully, persuasively and in full fidelity to the mind of the Church the challenge of God's Word, We heard that Word of God described in today's second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews. It is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12).

And as your good shepherd "on the spot," Father Tap is to know you personally and by name. He is to seek you out when you are lost or at loose ends and bring you back to sheepfold. He is to sacrifice himself for you. Moreover, your pastor is to guide you on the path that leads to the "eternal life," that is, the fullness of life, that Jesus came to bring us. He is also to work alongside you and with you to build up your parish as an evangelizing community which actively brings the Good News of Jesus to others.

In his apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis challenges parishes to be communities which reach out and bring the Gospel to those around them – first of all, of course, to their own families, above to their children, but also to their neighbours, co-workers and others: to go to the “peripheries” or margins of the comfortable world in which they live. Father Augustine is called to lead you in responding to this call of the Holy Father to be, as he wrote, a parish that is “completely mission-oriented.”

As Father Tap has done since the day of his Ordination, he is to encourage you to serve one another and the wider community in which you find yourselves..

He undertakes this mission and responsibility by offering the care of his spiritual fatherhood to all of you. And he will be able to accomplish all this – and I know he will – with the support of your prayers and your spirit of collaboration.

### ***Today’s Gospel***

Now just a word on this morning’s Gospel, which narrates the encounter of the rich young man with Jesus. “He was a good man who went to find Jesus and threw himself on his knees before him, a man who had piety in his heart, a religious man and a just man, who goes to Jesus because he feels something inside. He feels the urge to go beyond, to follow Jesus more closely. It was precisely the Holy Spirit that drove

him.”<sup>1</sup> And he approaches the Lord with a burning question – asked no doubt in earnest – “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mk 10:17).

This question is a piercing one, not just for him, but for each one of us: “What must I do that my life may have meaning?” It’s one of the hardest questions in the world, and one that we are often afraid to ask. What gives my life any sense? What’s worth living – and even dying – for?

Just observing the commandments was not enough. observing the precepts is not enough. That does not satisfy the young man’s desire for happiness. Jesus treats him with respect and for this reason his response is expressed in an intense gaze filled with tenderness and love: “Jesus looking at him, loved him” (Mk 10:21). He realized he was a good young man, and so he offers him a practical proposal, one designed for him. It’s tough and demanding: to achieve happiness he must give all his possessions to the poor and only then follow him (cf. Mk 10:21).

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<sup>1</sup> Francis, Morning Meditation (27 May 2013).

That young man's heart, however, was divided between two masters: God and money. He couldn't give up his "many possessions" and so he went away "shocked" and "grieving" (Mk 10:22). The lesson is simple: following Jesus and attachment to riches cannot coexist.<sup>2</sup>

We might think that the Lord is speaking here only about money and material possessions. And so we might dismiss this Gospel as applying to us. After all, we're struggling just to make ends meet. Even if we are not holding on to riches, we are often holding on to other things: resentment against spouses or family members; hard-heartedness towards our neighbour; vices of various kinds. All these and more can be harder to give up, to surrender to Jesus, even more than any riches we might have.

"Each and every one of us needs to examine our conscience and find out what riches keep us from approaching Jesus on the road of life."<sup>3</sup>

In some way each of us confronts the Lord with the same question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). And Jesus has an answer, one tailor-made for each of us. It begins for all of us with keeping the commandments, but it ends with the Lord asking even more

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (11 October 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Francis, Morning Meditation (27 May 2013).

of us. I do not know what he is asking each of you personally. You have to discern in the quiet of your conscience, and that requires careful, prayerful discernment.

What I do know is that the Lord comes to us and accompanies us in the very concrete details and events of our lives: our life as spouses, as parents, as workers, as neighbours. The details may vary. But we must all act like the wise man in today's First Reading: "I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me" (Wis 7:7).

We know that we cannot simply pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We are too fragile and too weak. "For humans – on our own steam – it *is* impossible to surrender to Jesus, "but not for God; for God all things are possible" (cf. Mk 10:27).

We live in a world of grace and gift. And God is not tightfisted or skimpy with his grace. He enables us as individuals and as a community to do what seems impossible, for he is with us in his Church, in the power of his Word and in his Sacraments.

### ***Conclusion***

We continue now with the Rite of Installation, in which Father Tap renews his priestly promises on your behalf as your servant leader, and then walk around the Church to the various places in which he nourishes this community as its shepherd and spiritual father and brother.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver