

Sunday: Ordinary 31b

Installation of Father Patrick Chisholm

St. Joseph's Church

4 November 2018

Dear Father Patrick, Father Jude, Deacon Dan, brothers and sisters of St. Joseph's Parish:

Introduction

As always on the Day of the Lord, today this community of faith at St. Joseph's, a community that brings God's love to everyone, gathers to give thanks and praise to God by offering the Eucharist, but today also to celebrate the formal installation of your new pastor, Father Patrick Chisholm. At this Holy Mass, after the homily, he will formally assume his ministry of serving as your spiritual father and shepherd.

But what does a pastor do, and why is he being installed? First to the last question, why an installation? Is Father Chisholm not already your pastor? Indeed, he is. Although the Church does not prescribe a Rite of Installation as canonically necessary, it is a public way for a parish family to recognize and welcome the appointment of its new pastor. Father Patrick comes to you to continue the pastoral care, offered so generously and with such dedication by Father Lawrence Donnelly, a compassionate shepherd and to whom I owe my gratitude for his ministry with you.

So, what are the responsibilities of a pastor? What is Father Patrick's mission to you as a community of faith? For what can you hold

him accountable?

As pastor, Father is faithfully to celebrate with you and for you the Church's Sacraments, above all by offering Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He is to proclaim to you forcefully, persuasively and in full fidelity to the mind of the Church the challenge of God's Word as a rivetting "two-edged sword." As your shepherd, he is also called to work with you to build up your parish as a living cell of the Body of Christ by encouraging you to serve one another and the wider community.

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.

As a community that brings God's love to everyone, your Parish must be, as Pope Francis says, "completely mission-oriented."¹ What does this mean for you? The Holy Father himself provides the answer:

¹ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28.

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.²

To be disciples, friends of Jesus, and to share that love with others is your mission.

The Greatest Commandment

The Word of God, which we heard proclaimed in the Gospel, has something to say about this. It reminds us that the whole of God’s law can be summed up in his desire that we love. St. Mark writes that an earnest religious leader asked him: “Which commandment is the first of all?” (Mk 12:28). This was not as easy a question as it seems because the Law of Moses, which they respected, had 613 commands. How can you pick one from all of these?

² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 33.

But Jesus does not hesitate, and he responds with confidence. He cites from the Scriptures, as we heard in the First Reading: “The first is . . . You shall love the Lord your God with your all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment” (Mk 12:29-30; cf. Dt 6:4-5).³ Quite simply, this means we are to love God with every fibre of our being, with everything we’ve got. It means to have a profound reverence and affection for him, and to give ourselves to him by pleasing him above all else.

What is the key word here? It is “love.” Loving is, in fact, what we are made for: to be loved and to love. Of course, I am not talking about the fleeting, shallow relationships often portrayed as “love” in our mass media. Rather, I am talking about the real love that is at the very heart of Jesus’ teaching.

Love is not a command. It is a gift, one of God’s greatest gifts to us. To be able to receive love from him and to give love back to him and others shows us his goodness. But it is also a gift that, like a seed, is meant to grow within us and develop throughout our life.⁴

Jesus not only tells us to love in words, but he shows us by his

³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (26 October 2008).

⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Angelus (4 November 2012).

whole life just what love means. He treated the crowds with compassion. He fed the hungry with earthly bread and, more importantly, with the Bread of life. He changed water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana to save a young couple from embarrassment. He raised Lazarus to return him to his sisters Martha and Mary. And he cured the sick and the suffering. And he forgave sinners – and what an act of love that is!

Above all, however, Jesus' love for us is demonstrated in his willingness to die on the Cross for each of us. True love, then, is about making sacrifices. It pulls us out of our selfishness and thinking only about ourselves. A person who loves does not ask, "What's in this for me?" but "What can I do for you?" "How can I help you out?"

One or Two Commandments of Love?

In the Gospel account, however, something surprising happens. After Jesus finished his answer about the "first commandment of all," he adds something which had not been asked. He said: "And the second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'" (Mk 12:31; cf. Lev 19:18), a command also already known to the Jewish people.

Jesus is the first Jew to join the two commandments together, by uniting them together making them inseparable, even while giving love

of God priority.⁵ This was a novel idea: that the love for God and the love for neighbour are two sides of the same coin. You can't love God, if you don't also love your neighbour.⁶

The Apostle John, who was probably Jesus' closest friend, is very clear about the impossibility of separating these two loves: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn 4:20).

⁵ Cf. Leroy A. Huizenga, *Loosing the Lion: Proclaiming the Gospel of Mark* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2017), 262-263.

⁶ Cf. Francis, Angelus (26 October 2014).

John emphasizes the unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbour. One is so closely connected to the other that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbour. Love of neighbour is a path that leads to God, and closing our eyes to our neighbour blinds us to God.⁷

Who is My Neighbour?

One further thought arises from the Gospel. While we know who God is, who is the “neighbour” we are called to love?

It is never easy, even for a parish community, to love their neighbour. In realistic but admonishing terms, Pope Francis has said in this regard:

⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 16.

Sometimes disagreements, pride, envy, divisions, leave their mark even on the beautiful face of the Church. Those who pay the price of these deeds are those who are spiritually weaker. How many of them – and you know some of them – how many of them have distanced themselves because they did not feel welcomed, did not feel understood, did not feel loved. . . . Even for a Christian, knowing how to love is never a thing acquired once and for all. We must begin anew every day. We must practice it so that our love for the brothers and sisters we encounter may become mature and purified from those limitations or sins that render it incomplete, egotistical, sterile, and unfaithful. We have to learn the art of loving every day.⁸

Once we understand that we have received God’s love first – he always takes the first step – then, with his help, we can “learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend,”⁹

Conclusion

We now proceed to the Rite of Installation with the reading of the

⁸ Francis, *Regina Caeli*, (21 May 2017).

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 18.

letter of Father Chisholm's appointment by Lucy Adams.

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

