

Sunday 20-B

Installation of Father Reynaldo Usman

St. Joseph's Parish, Squamish

19 August 2018

Dear Father Rey, Deacon Rennie, dear Sisters, and parishioners of St. Joseph's Parish: friends in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Installation

After a few remarks on today's Gospel, Father Rey Usman will be formally installed as your new pastor. His ministry of serving as your spiritual father and shepherd follows upon that so faithfully offered by Father Mark Bautista for the past eight years. I am grateful for Father Mark's dedicated ministry and among the many things he is to be remembered the one I would like to mention is bringing the Augustinian Sisters here to your parish. Thank you so much, Sisters, for the invaluable service you are rendering to this parish family.

But why is he being installed? Hasn't Father Rey not already been your pastor for five weeks? Indeed, he has. Although the Church does not prescribe a Rite of Installation as canonically necessary, it is a public way for your parish family to recognize and welcome the appointment of its new pastor.

So, what are Father Rey's responsibilities to this parish community as its pastor? What can you expect from him? And what can you hold him accountable for?

As pastor, he is to faithfully celebrate with you and for you the Church's Sacraments, above all by offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the Rite of Installation it becomes clear how he accompanies you from the rebirth of Baptism to the rebirth to eternal life. He is also to proclaim to you forcefully, persuasively and in full fidelity to the mind of the Church the challenge of the Word of God as a rivetting "two-edged sword." And, lastly, as your shepherd and spiritual father, he is to work with your vibrant and prayerful community, ensuring that each of you assumes their responsibilities. Together you work to build up your parish as a living cell in the Body of Christ; that is, he will encourage you to be "missionary disciples" who serve one another and the wider community in justice and mercy. Collaboration and unity of purpose are the hallmarks of a parish that is truly living the Gospel.

Father Rey undertakes his mission by offering you the care of his spiritual fatherhood. More than a leader or guide, more than coach or a distant cultic figure, he is your spiritual father whose principal responsibility before you and before God is to lead you on the sure path of salvation that will take you to the Father's house.

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.

In his apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis challenges parishes to be communities which themselves whose

members have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and, because of that, reach out and bring the Gospel to those around them – first of all, of course, to their own families, but also to their co-workers and neighbours near and far. The Church is calling Father Rey to lead all of you together – and each one individually – to responding to this call of the Holy Father to be a parish that is “completely mission-oriented.” Your parish is to have missionary outreach to others at the heart of its mission. “In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers”;¹ that is, to reach out to others, to invite them to come to know God’s merciful love for them. Led by your spiritual father, Father Rey Usman, St. Joseph’s Parish, like every other parish in the world, is being called to bring the joy of the Gospel to those who have not yet recognized God’s love for them.

Gospel

This Sunday’s Gospel is the concluding part and culmination of the discourse given by Jesus in the Synagogue of Capernaum, after he had fed thousands of people with five loaves and two fishes the day before. In this section of his preaching, Jesus reveals the meaning of that miracle; namely that the promised time had come. God the Father, who had fed the Israelites in the desert with manna, now sent him, the Son, as

¹ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28.

the true Bread of life, the true manna. But this bread is not perishable food but his flesh; that is his life, offered in sacrifice for us.

It is about eating his flesh and drinking his blood (cf. Jn 6:54) in order to obtain for ourselves the fullness of life. It is clear that this address was not given to attract approval. Jesus knew this and gave this speech intentionally. In fact it was a critical moment, a turning point in his public mission.

The people, and the disciples themselves, were enthusiastic when he performed miraculous signs. For instance, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes clearly revealed that he was the Messiah, so that the crowd would have liked to carry Jesus in triumph and proclaim him King of Israel. But this was not what Jesus wanted. With his long address he dampens the enthusiasm and incites much dissent.

In explaining that he himself was the “living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51), the Lord affirms that he has been sent to offer his own life. But then he goes on to say that whoever wants to follow him must be joined to him in a deep and personal way, participating in his sacrifice of love. How do we do this? By eating his flesh and drinking his blood; that is, we become one with him and can share in his mission when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion.²

² Cf. Benedict XVI, Angelus (16 August 2012).

What does Jesus mean by insisting that we have live *only if* we “eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man”(Jn 6:53)? Is he just using an image, a figure of speech, a symbol, or does he wish to indicate something real? Our only answer, the only answer of one who is a Catholic Christian, is that we take Jesus at his word. This is not a symbol or reminder of the Last Supper.

In the Eucharist, through sharing in the consecrated bread, now his Body, and the consecrated wine, now his Blood, Jesus makes us one with himself. Indeed he says: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in them” (Jn 6:56). By partaking of him in Holy Communion, we become as he is.

Sometimes we hear people say: “Of what use is Mass? I go to church when I feel like it, and I pray better alone or in the midst of nature. It’s good to pray alone or to be awestruck by nature’s beauty. But the Eucharist is not a private prayer or a beautiful spiritual exercise. It is not a simple commemoration of what Jesus did at the Last Supper. Rather, the Eucharist is a gesture which renders real and present the very event of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection: the bread really becomes his Body given up for us, and the wine really becomes his Blood poured out for us.

Jesus concludes his discourse with these words: “the one who eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:58). Yes, living in real communion

with Jesus on this earth lets us pass from death to life. Heaven begins precisely in this communion with Jesus.³

Conclusion

We now begin the Rite of Installation. It is a “pilgrim walk” around the Church which I make with the pastor, pointing out to him – and to you – the significant ways in which he accompanies you on your journey through life.

_ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

³ Cf. Francis, Angelus (16 August 2015).