

Homily of Archbishop Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago
Mass for Investment of the Pallium
Holy Name Cathedral
August 23, 2015

Word of Welcome

By the simple yet solemn act of placing the pallium on my shoulders, you Archbishop Viganò, have demonstrated the singular and important service you offer to the Church as a representative of the Holy Father. The pallium is a sign of the bond we in Chicago share with the successor of Peter, but you make real the personal nature of that bond by your presence today, which I might add we have been privileged to enjoy no less than four times over these nine months since my installation. Thank you for making Pope Francis so very present, by coming to Chicago once again today. We ask you please to convey to the Holy Father our warmest affection and esteem and assurances of our prayers as he prepares to visit us in three weeks and during his actual visit.

My heartfelt welcome to you all – young and old, interreligious leaders, elected officials, parishioners, women and men religious and priests from around the archdiocese, and friends and members of my own family who have travelled far. Your presence today is very encouraging.

In particular I want to tell my brother bishops from Illinois and the region how grateful I am for your support by joining us today. Thank you.

Chicagoans may be more familiar with one other bishop who is here this afternoon, as he brings us back to that celebrated moment last spring when we made a little wager with his diocese during the Stanley Cup Finals. Coming from Tampa, we welcome Bishop Bob Lynch of the Diocese of St. Petersburg. We're so delighted you're here. As Bob Hope used to say, "Thanks for the memories!"

Peter: Steward of the Church's Faith

Marc Chagall's famous painting, *The Praying Jew*, depicts a man, wrapped in a prayer shawl with phylacteries, ribbons imbedded with passages of the Torah from the Old Testament. They are banded around his head, reaching to the elbow and the hand. The point is simple – the one who prays is to sit with the Word of God that it may ever be in his mind, his heart and his actions. A garment rich in meaning, this prayer vestment provokes deep reflection.

So too does the pallium. Made of lamb's wool, marked with crosses and stained at the ends in black to resemble hoofs of the sheep, it is placed on the shoulders reminding the one who wears it and the entire church he serves that we are a community that goes after the lost sheep, not only those who have strayed, but those who are ignored, forgotten or overlooked. The task

is not just to find them and bring them home, but to lift them up high, to shoulder level, where they can begin to see and live a new life, the life of faith.

While there are no scripture texts imbedded in the pallium, we have the happy coincidence that the scripture readings for today are so apt, with a Gospel that features Peter, in union with the other 11 Apostles, leading the Church in making the act of faith in Christ, the Holy One of God. All of this invites us, then, to sit with the Word God and reflect on what is being asked of us, as the successor of Peter through his representative places the pallium on my shoulders as the pastor of the Church of this City of Big Shoulders. And, I do mean us, for I know I cannot carry this important responsibility by myself.

Notice in the first reading that like Peter, Joshua speaks for the people, and calls them to make an act of faith. He does so by recalling the story of God's marvelous deeds. He called them to remember: "...it was the LORD, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery. He performed those great miracles before our very eyes and protected us along our entire journey and among the peoples through whom we passed." For this reason, Joshua proclaims, anticipating Peter's response: "I stand with the Lord."

Every successor of St. Peter, and now Pope Francis, offers a similar service of memory for the Church. Traditionally, in union with the college of bishops, he has acted as the guarantor of the Church's deposit of faith, preserving and being in touch with what has been handed on and developed over the ages. His service is needed lest we begin to treat the church's tradition too narrowly and forget the history of our faith and the treasures we have. Recently, as I was visiting with some patrons of the Vatican Museum, I noted that the aim of the Museum is not to make the pope an art collector. Rather, it testifies to his role of preserving the heritage of how the beauty of creation and the Gospel has been expressed in each age. So, too, the pope guards the treasures of our faith so that nothing is lost, every keeping before us the entire tradition, lest we end up absolutizing one era.

Peter's successor not only keeps safe the entire treasury, the entire deposit as it has developed over 2000 years, but he keeps it before us in its entirety, reminding us of the whole story of God's mighty deeds, which continues to develop in each age with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Pope John XXIII offered this service of memory in his talk opening the Second Vatican Council. He called the entire Church to a fresh appreciation of the ancient teaching of the medicine of mercy in an era when many in the Church preferred the narrow path of severity and condemnation. So, too, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis quoted generously from statements on the environment made by bishops' conferences around the world and from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. In doing so he put us in touch with the universality of the Church, reminding us that God is doing great things not only in every age, but in every place around the world today. It is the pope's ministry that draws us out of a narrow provincial view that reduces our experience of Church to just what is happening in my parish, my diocese, my country. The pope's travels around the world similarly offer this service. As we follow him on these visits to Asia, to Latin America, to Europe and soon to our own country and after that to

Africa, he introduces us to our brothers and sisters in places we never visited, reminding us of what it means to be Catholic, a Church whose universality must be reflected in each particular Church. All of this has much to say to this local Church as he gives us a share in his unique ministry through the pallium.

Peter: Witness of the Resurrection

Today's readings also remind us that Peter serves as a witness to the full meaning of the resurrection. Notice how Peter senses instinctively that there is something new about this Jesus of Nazareth, he calls him "the Holy One of God", which literally means the one who is alive with the creative life of God. Peter understands this fully when Jesus is raised from the dead, reminding us that the resurrection cannot be limited to an event that happened two thousand years ago. It is about the Risen Lord, whom Pope Francis constantly tells us, is always doing something new. This is how he puts it in *The Joy of the Gospel*, and I quote: "Jesus can always break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him, and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity," to the point that "new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs, and words with new meaning for today's world."

It occurs to me that the reading from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians today is a good example of how the early Church experienced the newness brought about by the Risen Lord. Honestly, many preachers prefer to avoid this text, as it has a phrase that makes many squirms – especially men - as they hear the words, "wives be submissive to your husbands." What is overlooked, however, is the opening sentence that husbands and wives are to be subordinate to each other. They each are to become lowly, poor for each other. People in this era of the early Church would have found this quite astonishing, if not revolutionary. Subordination in a family was not a two way street at that time. Christ was doing something utterly new in the human family, changing how people understand their relationships with each other as family. With the upcoming synod, it is clear that the Holy Father is calling the Church to examine our categories of expression about what we believe and be open to new avenues and creativity when it comes to accompanying families. All of this has much to say to us in Chicago, that we not settle for solutions that no longer work, expressions that no longer inspire and ways of working that stifle creativity and collaboration.

Concluding Words on the Challenge Peter Give Us

Peter's unique ministry in the Church is a great gift, as is the pallium received today. Our commission begins with searching out the lost, but it does not end there. Once found, the lost are to be lifted high above the daily toil, so that they may see their salvation as but another of the mighty deeds of God over the ages, so that in being raised high they will experience the newness of risen life and by being lifted to eye level, they will see Christ face to face and come to believe in God's love.

When Chagall painted *The Praying Jew* in 1923, he asked a local street beggar to dress in his father's clothes and serve as the model. The Lord likewise chose the beggar Peter, as his

model, a man weak and sinful by his own admission and the Church's. In fact, the earliest depictions of Peter in Christian art are of a man weeping, the repentant Peter. Just as Peter's faith is a model for us, his poverty and lowliness is too, as we take up this share in his ministry. A great reminder to us, that while we are honored to join in this service and leadership, we do so as poor beggars, depending not on our accomplishments and strengths but on his grace and mercy. For like Peter, we know the value of lifting up to shoulder level the lost, for we have been lost ourselves.