



CONGREGATIO PRO CLERICIS

“Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice?”

Pontificale Romanum: De Ordinatione Episcopi, presbyterorum et diaconorum,

Edition typical, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1990)

From the Vatican, 15th October 2009

Dear Brothers in the Priesthood,

The one motivation for our lives and for our ministry is Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ! The existence of Priests finds in Him, and only in Him, its origin, its aim and the development proper to it in time. The intimate and personal relationship with the Risen Lord, living and present, is really the only experience which might drive a man to give himself completely to God for his brethren.

We know well, dear brothers, how the Lord seduced us, how his fascination was irresistible for everyone, as the prophet says, “O LORD, you seduced me, and I was seduced; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed” (Jer. 20: 7). This fascination, like every truly valuable thing, needs to be continually defended, treasured, protected and cultivated lest it be lost or, perhaps worse still, lest it become a faded memory which is unable to take on the sometimes aggressive thrust of the world’s reality. The divine intimacy, the origin of every apostolate, is the secret for treasuring in an enduring fashion the fascination of Christ.

We are priests prior to any other reason, however good, to be “united more closely to Christ the High Priest”, united to Him who is our only salvation, the Love of our hearts, the Rock on which we build every act of our ministry, He who knows us more closely than we know our own selves, and whom we desire more than any other thing. Christ the High Priest draws us within himself. This

union with Him, which the Sacrament of Order is, carries with it a participation in His offering: “Being united to Christ calls for renunciation. It means not wanting to impose our own way and our own will, not desiring to become someone else, but abandoning ourselves to him, however and wherever he wants to use us” (Benedict XVI, Homily, Holy Mass of Chrism 9th April 2009). The expression, “to be united” reminds us that none of this is our work, the result of our own efforts, but the work of Grace within us: it is the Spirit who unites us ontologically to Christ the Priest and gives us the strength to persevere, all the way to the end, in this participation in the divine work and thus also in the divine life. The “pure victim” then, which Christ the Lord is, reminds each of us of the irreplaceable value of celibacy, which implies perfect continence for the Kingdom of Heaven, and that purity which renders our offering for our fellow man “pleasing unto God”.

May the intimacy of Jesus Christ and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the all-beautiful” and “all-pure”, sustain us in this daily journey of participation in that Work of Another, in which the priestly ministry consists, knowing that such a participation is replete with salvation above all for us who live it: Christ, in that sense, is our life.

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