



Homily by Bishop Anthony Randazzo
on the Ordination to the Priesthood
of Deacon Joseph Martin Hien Vu
Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle
24 August 2024

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today, as we gather to celebrate the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, the Apostle, we also come together with great joy and solemnity to witness the ordination of Deacon Joseph Martin Hein Vu to the sacred priesthood. This is a moment of profound grace, not only for Hien and his family but for our entire community of the Church. In our readings today, we are presented with a powerful vision of the Church and the call to holiness that is at the heart of our Christian life.

The Book of the Apocalypse offers us a glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, with its twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles. This vision reminds us of the enduring faithfulness of God and His covenant with His people.

As you, Deacon Hien, enter into your priestly ministry, you are called to be a living witness to this divine faithfulness. It is by clinging to God's faithfulness that you will be able to accompany others on their journey of faith, guiding them to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, urges us to live a life worthy of our vocation. This calling is not only for you, Hien, as a priest but for all the faithful. It is the universal call to holiness, formed in our baptismal vocation. The Apostle rightly reminds the entire People of God, lay and ordained, of our duty to participate in God's work of salvation.

As a priest, you are called to serve the saints of God here on earth and to intercede through the saints of God in heaven. Your life must be a testament to the unity and maturity that Saint Paul speaks of, as you build up and sanctify the Body of Christ.

In the Gospel of John, we hear of the encounter between Jesus and Nathanael, who is often identified as Bartholomew. When Nathanael declares, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel", Jesus promises that he will see greater things. This encounter is a powerful reminder of the transformative power of recognising Jesus as the Messiah. As a priest, you are anointed by the Spirit of sanctification to lead God's people to this recognition.

Your enduring life in the Spirit will inflame your courage to proclaim the truth of the Gospel, both in word and in deed; in season and out of season; to those who are ready to receive it, and to those who in hostility reject it.

The spirit of courage will make you zealous for the Lord, not the Lord's zealot. Zeal for the Good News of Jesus Christ is always tempered by love and mercy, justice and peace. Always love the people entrusted to your care.

My dear son, your ordination today is a profound reminder that the grace of the Holy Spirit's anointing is not merely placed upon you, but rather it dwells within you. This grace will embolden you to proclaim God's truth; to herald the anointed shepherd-king, Jesus Christ, the eternal high Priest, crucified and risen, to the Church and to the nations.

This public proclamation will be joyfully received if, and only if, we priests are first conformed to Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. Anything less will compromise our ability to announce the Gospel with authenticity. Anything less would reveal us as impostors to the world. You will find joy in the priesthood, not because of any privilege, but for the dignity of being ordained into the priesthood of Christ.

Saint Bartholomew, whose feast we celebrate today, gave his life for Christ. His martyrdom is a powerful witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Hien, as a priest, you too are called to be configured to Christ crucified. This configuration is not merely symbolic; it demands a life of sacrificial love, humility, and unwavering dedication to the truth. Like every vocation, it will invite and urge the complete giving of oneself.

Your life as a priest will be recognised by your profession of the truth that Jesus is Master, the Son of God, the Saviour sent to redeem fallen humanity and indeed the whole world. Your priestly ministry is a call to live a life worthy of your calling, participating fully in the communion of Christ in the Church and in His mission in the world.

You are called to serve the saints of God here on earth and to intercede through the saints of God who are in heaven. Your life in the Spirit will empower you to proclaim the truth of the Gospel boldly and courageously, both in word and in deed.

Hien, as you embark on this sacred journey, remember that you are not alone. You are supported by the prayers and love of your family, friends, your bishop and brother priests, and the entire community of the Church.

Most importantly, you are upheld by the faithful presence of Christ, who promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age.

May God bless you abundantly in your priestly ministry, may Mary, Star of the Sea, guide you to her Son Jesus, and may the Holy Apostle Bartholomew intercede for you always.

Amen.