

The Ordination of the Rev. Laurette Gauthier Glasgow
to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood
October 11, 2008
All Saints Church, Waterloo
The Rt. Rev. Pierre W. Whalon, D.D.

“Whom shall I send?”

“Here I am—send me.”

These words of the prophet Isaiah are fateful words indeed. They are the words that all of us in one way or another have said, as we have made and repeated our vows of Baptism. Today we gather to hear Laurette Gauthier Glasgow say once more to the Holy Trinity, the Communion of saints, and you and me, “Here I am—send me.” And we shall respond, on behalf of God and the Catholic Church, by ordaining her a Priest.

To ordain and send forth priests is a vital part of the ministry of the Convocation. It requires among other things a Bishop to do so. But everything begins in the parish—this parish, to be specific. As Laurette began to explore what God is calling her to do, her community of faith and its leader, Fr. Kempton Baldrige, helped her to discern what this call was. At the Cathedral, she worked under Dean Fleetwood, as well as other mentors. And now here she is.

St. Luke tells us that when Gabriel greeted Mary—in the familiar translation, “Hail Mary, full of grace”—she pondered in her heart what sort of greeting this might be (Lk. 1:29). In other words, God was calling her to her particular ministry, and the Virgin Mary went through her own discernment process. It was a whole lot quicker than Laurette’s, which lasted five years, and it had a somewhat different result, but the response for both women was the same: “Let it be for me as you have said.”

One can see the ministry of a priest in the same terms as that of St. Mary the Virgin: to make Jesus Christ manifest in the world. And this in turn reveals the divine pattern that is repeated over and over. As St. Paul described it in Philippians chapter 2, quoting a Christian hymn from his conversion: Jesus Christ considered that equality with God was not a thing to be clutched at, but instead poured himself out—emptied himself—and took the form of a slave. And became obedient, even to death on a cross. There is the pattern—we lose before we gain. We don’t do what we want, as Jesus said, but rather the will of the One who is sending us.

Priests are people who, like the other Orders, intensify and focus attributes of every Christian, for the good of the whole. The ordained are here to help the baptized accomplish the work of the Church. Deacons exemplify the servanthood of Christ that we are all to imitate, first and foremost. Bishops symbolize the authority of the Church and every one of its members to go forth and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them and teaching what the Lord taught us. Priests show forth that all of us are mediators between God and the creation, showing forth God’s gifts and lifting up to God the world’s concerns and needs.

Priests therefore are principally charged with preaching the Word, teaching the Faith, and faithfully celebrating the sacraments. Each of these replicates the divine pattern.

In Baptism we must first die with Christ and be buried with Christ, before we are raised to new life with Christ, as Paul says in Romans 6:3-4. Loss precedes gain. And we are united to one another—and that often means we end up being with people we ordinarily would not want to be associated with! I mean, take a look around you...

In the Eucharist we see the same pattern again. At the Last Supper, Jesus poured himself out into bread and wine. In this way he made his betrayers—Judas first but also the others, beginning with Peter—into his guests. Whether they wanted it or not. All who would harm and destroy him, as well as those who merely abandoned him when the going got rough, were stymied by this self-emptying by Jesus. The French biblical scholar France Quéré wrote a book some time ago entitled *Les ennemies de Jésus* (The enemies of Jesus), in which she points out that all the insults hurled at Jesus turn into flowers thrown at his feet, so to speak. “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!” Because he is the Son of God, he would not. Loss precedes gain.

The Word that we preach is to have the same shape. We need to pronounce God’s judgment as well as God’s extraordinary unmerited gift. They are two sides of the same coin. Sin precedes Gospel. Grace precedes faith. We need to know our need before we can accept the unmerited gift of God in Jesus.

And in the sacrament of Holy Orders, the same pattern exists. We all take vows when we are ordained, as Laurette has already done in her ordination to the diaconate and which she has begun again today. Specifically, we promise to conform to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church. Now there are some people who think these have no substance to them, that “anything goes.” Nothing could be further from the truth. To make this vow is to give over control of your life to a very human institution, the Church. And it means that we are responsible for maintaining our conformity. Others are freer, perhaps—the ordained are not.

And there is another vow—to obey your Bishop. Not “I will obey the bishop so long as he or she is wise, intelligent, nice to me”—but to obey regardless of how idiotic the bishop sounds. (I should know, I listen to myself every morning.) The word “obey” has its root which means “to hear deeply.” So we promise to listen very carefully to what the bishop says. Yet another diminishment.

And of course, there are the other vows today: to pray constantly, to study Scripture daily, and so on. All of these are infringements on our freedom as Christians: they are part and parcel of being in Orders, which really means “to be under Orders.”

And there is more. Laurette, you are a particularly gifted woman: a great wife, a good mother (so I have heard and I believe it). You are brilliant, as your theology studies show. You are highly competent and responsible, as your diplomatic career attests. And now you are to be a priest—where none of that will matter.

You will work hard with a family, and know you have done well as their pastor, only to see them leave you. You will preach your heart out and half the congregation will

dwindle away. None of your competence will matter. It is immensely frustrating at times. You must suffer loss before you can gain.

Yet God will use every ounce of your being, every experience good or bad, your sins as well as your virtues. God is absolutely unscrupulous about this. But his grace, in the power of the Spirit, must always be first and foremost.

It is God's mission, not the church's. It is God's work, not ours. Not yours.

And finally, Laurette, let me tell you the secret of the priesthood, the only thing that really matters in the end. Allow Christ to break your heart with his heart, and you will know his joy. All around us, the heart of Jesus is breaking. Yes, Peter and the disciples and maybe even Judas himself knew later what had happened, but first they had to break Jesus' heart. "I am the Bread of Life," because I have been rejected.

You must allow your heart to be broken along with his. In fact, only by allowing him to break your heart will you truly know the joy of your priesthood, the joy that has been reserved just for you.

"Whom shall I send?"

"Here I am—send me."

So said Isaiah. So you said. And with the Virgin Mary and all the saints, you have also said, "Let it be for me as you have said." And so it shall.

Amen.