

Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
For the Ordination of
Fathers Joseph Kuhlman and Lawrence Peck
Cathedral Basilica of Saint Augustine
June 20, 2015

Love Waits, Love Is Patient. Love endures all things.

Joseph, Lawrence, you have witnessed this kind of love, and today this love led you to receive the holy sacrament of priesthood at the beginning of the summer.

The Lord promised: I will give you shepherds according to my Heart, and this assembly – representing the entire people of God in our Diocese of St. Augustine, rejoices and magnifies the Lord for the gift of the election, consecration, and sending forth of these two new shepherds for the care of our people.

St. John Eudes wrote on the shepherd's job description:

To strengthen what is weak, to bind up what is broken,

To bring back what was driven away, to preserve what is well and strong.

A true shepherd should be a burning interiorly and shining exteriorly, on fire in prayer, a light to others in action. To be shining and burning is holiness.

This light must be strong and brilliant, and it must come from a torch so flaming and fiery that it cannot be extinguished.

We pray daily for holy shepherds, shepherds with “odor of sheep” as Pope Francis has coined so well.

For St. Augustine considers shepherding the Lord's flock as a duty of love, “*amoris officium.*” Diocesan priests excel in that availability of service in the midst of multiple shifts of needs in a most diverse set of situations.

Being a shepherd of souls as instruments of the one and only shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ involves personal sufferings and tribulations as St. Paul shared so openly with the community of Corinth.

At times our challenge comes from the realization of our personal limitations; at times it is the awareness of the huge scope of needs crying for care. At times the challenge is facing the traps of the enemy and the persecutions we face from those who persecute us, but the love of Christ is strong and Christ's strength is given to his shepherds. As Paul says, His grace is sufficient. What

the priest says at Mass – holding the consecrated Host and the Chalice of salvation – is the secret of priestly existence. In Him, with Him and in Him – *per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso*, (this) is the greatest source of strength in relating all his sufferings with the furnace of the Eucharistic Heart of Christ. Let me illustrate this even more concretely: In the movie *The Passion*, remember the scene of Simon of Cyrene – he is taken from the crowd to carry the burden of Christ’s Cross. He is reluctant, he did not want this ...but he joins Christ...his hands get closer to the hands of Christ – intimacy develops – he pays attention to Jesus’ patient love – the viewer notices his passage from resistance to full participation in the Master’s Cross.

There is a great grace of perseverance in priestly ministry: loving to the end. It’s the grace of being grateful to suffer for the Lord’s mission out of magnanimous love.

The gospel chosen for today says: therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.

As the psalmist says, my power is in fully trusting you!

All along the 450th year journey of faith in St. Augustine I have found helpful a word of Ignatius of Loyola which gives meaning to the heroic stories of evangelization in Florida. St. Ignatius states in a letter: “there are very few men who realize what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves entirely to his hands and let themselves be formed by his Grace.” These multitude of heroic missionaries showed how amazing their gift of caring was motivated by total trust.

Reflecting on these 450 years, the believer sees the “wonderful deeds” that have taken place here by those who were allowed to take part in this history of grace in spite of their fears, in spite of their doubts, they consented with incredible confidence in imitation of the Marian fiat (let be done) with trust in the one who is the master of the impossible.

In looking at the Mother of the Lord, Augustine was fascinated above all by the beauty of her faith. Even before she was the Mother of the Lord, she believed. She believed first in her abandonment to the will, making possible our salvation. (In the words of Augustine:): “He who is the great and Eternal Day came from the great and endless day of eternity into our own short day of time.” (Sermon 185, 1-2)