

**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estevez for the
Priestly Ordination of
Brother Simeon (Erasmus Leiva Merikakis) and the
Diaconate Ordination of
Brother Emmanuel Morinelli (Dennis Joseph Morinelli)
St. Joseph's Abbey in Spenser, Massachusetts
April 6, 2013**

Texts: Acts. 4, 13-21; 2 Cor. 4, 1-2; 5-7; Mk. 16, 9-15

“Overcome with paschal joy,” this assembly praises the victory of our God. The new age of the Resurrection fills all liturgical celebrations and especially today’s celebration of the sacrament of holy orders. As the Catechism of the Church states: “holy orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate. It is wonderful that in this liturgy the three orders will be manifested for the glory of God and the enrichment of the Church. (CCC. 1536).

From today on Brother Simeon will act in persona Christi capitis – acting in the power and place of the person of Christ himself.

From today on will be dedicated to the ministry of service in the image of Christ, the deacon and servant of all.

1. As we heard from the II Corinthians, Paul states that “having obtained God’s mercy, we are in this ministry.” (4, 1) If we could see inside our two brothers, we would notice a marvelous amazement at God’s condescension revealed in their life. I have learned how when Simeon was a child in Camaguey, Cuba, he would gather his cousins for a Mass and he would celebrate for them using a red notebook seeking to resemble a huge size red missal in Latin used by the local priest. Many years later, he was told to interpret God’s ways who even then was whispering a call to become a man for the Eucharist. (*Lectura en Espanol*).

As St. Paul stated in the same II Corinthians: “but we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us (4, 7). It is not surprising for a spiritual man to experience his littleness vis a vis the dignity of God’s choice. He is fully aware of his obstacles to grace, his passivity in witnessing the totality of the Gospel. He has even a sharp awareness of his sinful life and omissions. Yet the weak “vessel of clay” cannot hinder the surpassing energy of the fire of mercy revealing God’s power in his fragile servants. It is appropriate for us to boast that nothing is impossible to God whose generosity does not have limits.

2. The holy word of God interprets for us the purpose of these sacramental holy orders which is directed to the salvation of others, feeding the Church by the word and grace of God...building the entire people of God. (CCC 1533-35).

Peter and John unapologetically tell the officials that “we cannot keep from speaking what we have seen and heard”...Jesus had chosen these “ordinary men” – as Scripture calls them – to be his disciples, that is to follow him, to be with him and only after this experience of hearing and seeing they would become his witnesses and missionaries. The solemn send-off confirms it: “Go into the entire world and proclaim the good news to the whole of creation.” (Mk 16, 15)

This missionary fire witnessed by Jesus himself is first of all a Trinitarian spirituality as John Paul II reminded us in *Redemptor Missio*. Doctor of the Church, St. Therese of Lisieux exemplifies this mission of prayer at the heart of the Church for the sake of the apostolate of others. The monk participates in the missionary activity of the Church from a privileged position...and faithful to his own identity, no wonder the contemplative young woman from Lisieux is the patroness of the missions!!

Alerted by the white smoke over the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican, we realized a new pope had been chosen. In his first appearance we knew he had taken the name of Francis. As he was about to give the first blessing to the crowds in St. Peter’s Plaza, he paused and asked the people to pray to God asking God to bless the new pope. He then bowed for few minutes as this prayer was taking place.

In this first gesture, Francis taught us that to minister is to enable the faith in others, to enable them to recognize their call to ministry, to actively participate like Francis of Assisi in building the Church.