

APOSTOLICITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE EPISCOPAL COLLEGE*

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Today we are gathered to welcome in our midst their Excellencies, Archbishop Carmine Recco, Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, and Bishop Jose Sanchez, Auxiliary Bishop of Caceres. In expressing our cordial welcome to their Excellencies in the form of civic and liturgical actions, we would want to assure them that our manifestations are not merely dictated by routinary exigencies of conventional customs but are the expression of our religious conviction of obligation to render respect, honor and homage to their Excellencies as the recognized successors of the apostles, who are "to watch over the Church of God which the Holy Spirit has entrusted to them as bishops; and as shepherds of the flock which Jesus Christ has won for himself at the price of His own blood."

With the presence of His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, as representative of the Holy Father, at the installation ceremonies of Bishop Jose Sanchez as Auxiliary Bishop of Caceres, today seems a propitious occasion to review the apostolic constitution of the Church and the succession of bishops in the episcopal college.

It is a dogma of faith that Peter was constituted by Christ as the supreme head of the Apostles and the Church. He received his authority directly from Christ, and independently of the twelve apostles.

* Welcome address delivered on the occasion of the installation of Bishop Jose T. Sanchez on May 13, 1968.

The other apostles had nothing to do with his election as their head. The selection was exclusively dependent on Christ's will. The power, authority and jurisdiction granted to Peter extend to all the faithful; to each and all the pastors throughout the world till the end of time. This same power and prerogatives are directly transmitted to whoever lawfully succeeds him. The Pope, as the legitimate successor of Peter, has immediate, apostolic and supreme authority over the whole world. By divine institution, the pope enjoys full, immediate and universal authority over all the faithful.

In welcoming, therefore, in our midst, His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio of His Holiness, we welcome not only *a man* of ordinary consequence and stature but *one* whose position in the Church is unique: a representative of the Pope who is *the* lawful successor of *Peter* to whom Christ has entrusted the mission to feed His sheep and His lambs; the pastors and the faithful alike. On this occasion it is well to turn our attention, to renew our allegiance, and to revive our loyalty to His Holiness, the supreme authority in the Church of Christ. In giving and reverent homage, therefore, we renew our filial devotion to His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, our common spiritual Father, through his official representative to the Philippines, His Excellency, Archbishop Carmine Rocco.

To *both* their Excellencies, Archbishop Rocco and Bishop Jose Sanchez, who are the object of our welcome, we would like to honor them not as men of ordinary vocation in the Church but as members of the college of bishops; as successors of the apostles who are the foundation stone laid down by Jesus Christ, upon which He has built His Church. It may profit us in many ways to recall that Christ has established a Church that has to endure for all times; that He has endowed it with a hierarchical authority with the power to teach, to sanctify and to govern it. He instituted the episcopal order and college with Peter as its head. The Church and the apostles co-exist essentially. The one cannot subsist without the other, although it is Jesus Christ that sustains it with His vivifying grace and assistance. "As my Father has sent me, I am sending you out in my turn."

All the apostles received the same fullness of power of order directly from Christ. The same power granted to Peter, the same was

also bestowed upon the others, except that their exercise of it had to be under the authority of Peter who was explicitly appointed as the sole head to shepherd the whole flock. Christ very wisely and practically saw to it that there should be unity and security in His Church. That, should dissension among his followers ever happen, there should be an authority to whom recourse may be made and whose decision admits of no further appeal. This supreme infallible power was granted to Peter and transmitted to his successors. This divine disposition serves to ensure security and unity in the Church.

The mission entrusted by Christ to the apostles to go and teach all nations has not ceased with the death of the Apostles. It has to endure for all times and embrace all peoples and places. Actually it continues in the person of their successors, the bishops in communion with the vicar of Christ. In their character as the officially ordained successors of the apostles, and as the duly authorized envoys and missionaries of Christ, the bishops enjoy the highest and most precious spiritual gift that God can ever grant to any man. While it is true that each bishop is the particular pastor only of that portion of the flock entrusted to his care, it is likewise true that by divine institution he is the lawful successor of the apostles, and this makes him jointly responsible with the other members of the episcopal college of bishops for the preservation of the faith and the growth of the Church. The power of order bestowed by Christ on the apostles and the bishops is equal to that of Peter and the Pope. It is the same episcopal order with all its excellency and fullness. Under the leadership of the Pope as the unifying and directing head, the episcopate is the same for all bishops, whether they are resident or auxiliary bishops; whether active in the ministry or retired.

The episcopal college with the pope as its head is the equivalent of the apostolic college with Peter as the head. By virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the pope and the other members of the college, a bishop becomes part of the episcopal body. The apostolic body continues without interruption from the time of Christ through the ages to the present time in the episcopal order. There was never a time when there was no teaching and governing authority in the Church. The episcopate as an order instituted by Christ

has always existed and will continue to exist. Christ has assured His Church of indefectibility in the apostolic succession. It may unfortunately happen as it did happen that a Bishop defect from the episcopal college. Such isolated cases do not essentially affect the indefectibility of the whole body. The supreme and full power over the universal Church resides not on individual bishops but on the episcopal body with its head, the Roman Pontiff, and never without this head. The stability of the Church and of the episcopate has been guaranteed by Christ. The gates of hell will not prevail against them.

Such is the excellence and fullness of the episcopal order that all priests as well as deacons participate in and take a share of their power from the bishops. Priests and deacons are dependent upon the bishops in the exercise of their authority. By divine institution, the bishops... are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God. They are the source of spiritual life in the Church, guardians of the faith, rulers of the people of God.

There is only one priesthood. That of Christ. Its fullness resides in the bishop. All priests whether diocesan or religious participate in and exercise this only one priesthood of Christ with the bishop. Priests, therefore, have to regard the bishop as the source of their spiritual power and authority. Their cooperation with the bishop in the mission entrusted by Christ to teach, to sanctify, and to govern the people of God stems from the priesthood which is one and the same in every priest. They form only one family with the bishop as the father. No priest can appoint himself officially as a preacher, as a teacher, even as an evangelist. He must be deputized by the Church in order that his mission as Christ's official envoy may carry authentic character. He must be sent by the Church, more precisely by the bishop, so that he can speak for the Church. It is the bishop who raises the priest to the priesthood and makes him participate in its spiritual power and authority: in its graces and prerogatives. The Church is in the bishop according to St. Cyprian.

Having now in mind the very delicate position of the bishops in the Church, and the greatness of their responsibility in continuing their mission as successors of the apostles, I find it appropriate to repeat the beautiful prayer said by the consecrating bishop for the bishop-elect dur-

ing the consecration ceremonies which we can offer for all bishops: "In his preaching, may he never employ the language of human wisdom to persuade, but rely on the manifestation of the Spirit and the power of God. May he who curses him be accursed, and he who obeys him be abundantly blessed. May he be that good and faithful servant appointed by thee, O Lord, over thy household: to give them their portion of meat in due season and make all men perfect. Outwardly unwearied in all his duties, may he inwardly guard strength of soul. May he hate pride and love humility and truth, never forsaking them for love of praise or for any motive of fear. May he never set darkness in place of light, nor light in place of darkness. May he never give evil the name of good nor good the name of evil. May he know that he is answerable to the wise and to the foolish, to the learned and to the ignorant, that he may draw profit from the advancement of all." Amen.