

HOMILY
BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA
EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF BISHOP DANIEL FLORES
BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHEDRAL
NOVEMBER 29, 2006

Readings: Isaiah 61:1-3a; John 10:11-16

Bishop Flores, Archbishops DiNardo and Gomez, Bishops Carmody and Gracida, and all my brother Bishops; my brother Priests of the Diocese of Corpus Christi; Clergy of the Archdiocese of Detroit; Friends and Family of Bishop Flores, and my Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Every Holy Eucharist celebrates a holy exchange of gifts. In fact, we could speak of the whole Christian life as an expression of communion, a sharing of God's gifts for us and through us. In ordaining Bishop Flores, we have a very visible and powerful witness to the holy exchange of gifts.

We thank our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Carmody, and the Diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas, for the gift you share with us this day of one of the shining lights of your clergy, an outstanding teacher and pastor, a man of deep prayer and compassionate concern for God's people. Bishop Flores, on behalf of the faithful of the Archdiocese of Detroit, we say, "congratulations" and "thank you," or if you will allow me to offer a few words in Spanish, "*felicidades*" and "*gracias*." With humble gratitude we joyfully accept the gift you offer. May this happy occasion prompt more future sharing with your diocese in the years ahead.

This is a great and historic moment for our Church of Detroit, and especially for the ever-growing Hispanic population of Michigan. For decades now, thanks to the generous service of many of our own Archdiocesan clergy, religious, and extern priests, we have been blessed to provide unique pastoral care for people of Hispanic origin. And now, today, we will have a bishop who knows their culture firsthand and will truly be able to speak out of the same experience. In today's celebration, we rejoice in the "holy exchange of gifts" the Hispanic people bring to our Church of Detroit and to the Church Universal. We thank you for your strong commitment to family life and the sanctity of marriage. We rejoice with you in the blessing of Our Lady of Guadalupe and all the Hispanic traditions of faith in the many countries and cultures you represent. All cultures, together, are woven into the beautiful tapestry that is the Church.

Bishop Flores, through your Episcopal consecration, you will share with me and all the other members of the Episcopal College in the apostolic ministry of the Church under the leadership of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. As such, you will, therefore, be immersed all the more fully in the universality of the Church with all its gifts and needs. In a sense, you are being sent on a mission that will extend far beyond this Archdiocese. I know you will never forget your place of origin and the Church you have loved and served so well for almost two decades. All your experiences as professor and pastor will serve you here in good stead and in the many different places and settings the Lord will call you as you shepherd His people in the years ahead.

These very hours, as we gather here to celebrate a communion of gifts, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, is making an extremely important pastoral visit to the Church in Turkey. His visit there is ecumenical and interfaith, and will have enormous implications and repercussions for the dialogue of faith and reason in every part of the world. His courage and commitment to such a vision and such a dialogue is, of itself, a great witness and challenge for us all. He reminds us that ministry in the name of the Lord and His Church entails a true dialogue of faith, something that often goes beyond words and expresses itself in loving service.

In today's first reading from the Prophet Isaiah, we hear about the dialogues of faith as we listen to the very words that Jesus once spoke at the beginning of his public ministry: "*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted... to announce a year of favor from the Lord...*" One of the first duties of a bishop is the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are reminded by Isaiah that the dialogue of faith does not begin at our initiative; rather, it is the Lord God who has written into our hearts a desire and a need for meaning and hope. Our human searching opens us up to be attentive to the mysterious and powerful ways that God proclaims His love for us through the voice of the prophets, and above all, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Bishop Flores has chosen an episcopal motto that beautifully expresses this theme: "*Verbum Mittitur Spirans Amorem*" or "*The Word is sent breathing forth love.*" The Word is consoling and loving, and is still breathing forth wisdom, peace, and joy to all of us.

As a bishop, you will now enjoy the privileged responsibility of teaching the faith and proclaiming a word of hope and encouragement to people of all cultures and languages. Although the circumstances may vary, ultimately, it is one same Word that people need to hear—the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As bishops, priests, and deacons, we are ministers of God's Word, a Word that we can only proclaim to others if we have first heard it in the silence of our hearts through contemplative prayer. One of the first things I have noticed about you, Bishop Flores, is your very deep contemplative spirit, your sense of wonder and awe at the many ways God's Spirit is at work in the world.

Our work of evangelization naturally leads people to the Lord's altar, to a desire to share in the mystery of His Death and Resurrection through the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments. As a bishop, with me, you receive the apostolic mission from Christ, the High Priest and Good Shepherd. As the Council Fathers of Vatican II have explained, "*Bishops are the principle dispensers of the mysteries of God, just as they are the governors, promoters, and guardians of the entire liturgical life of the Church committed to them. Hence, they should constantly exert themselves to have the faithful know and live the Paschal Mystery more deeply through the Holy Eucharist and thus become a firmly knit body in the solidarity of Christ's love*" (CD 15).

You will lead others to deeper holiness in the Lord precisely by affirming the dignity of every Christian vocation and giving witness to the service of Christ the Good Shepherd, who truly knows and loves every one of His flock. Of the many relationships you will develop in the months and years ahead here in the Archdiocese, I know you will give special focus to the gifts and needs of your brother priests, affirming them as they minister, always inviting them to remember the greater common good of the whole Archdiocese.

As a shepherd, you will join me in a concern not only for the unity of the Church, but also in looking for ever-new ways to promote the dignity of human life from the first moment of conception until natural death. As a teacher, you will not only be handing on and renewing our Catholic people in their understanding of the faith, but will also be called to articulate our faith values and show how they apply to the many social issues of our times. With me and the other bishops of the state, I trust you will be a voice speaking on behalf of the basic human rights for all people. Because of your background, heritage, and experience, you will have a special opportunity to witness to the special needs of migrant people; you will help others become ever-more sensitive to cultural diversity and the way our Church and our country will be stronger as we learn to share the gifts and resources with one another.

As a good shepherd among the Christian community, I trust you will deepen your own holiness through the exercise of your episcopal ministry among the people of God. Your availability and sensitivity to the ordained and laity alike will be a source of joy and encouragement for them and for yourself as well. You will help to build up the unity of our Archdiocese by your support and involvement in the work of the parishes and schools, institutions and agencies of our local area that continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Flores, you have come to us as an apostle and a missionary. I cannot help but recall that Spanish was indeed the language of the first evangelizers of this American continent, and now you will be for us a living witness to the dialogue of salvation by your very presence itself. Your apostolic zeal and example of prayer will help to unleash among us ever-new ways of listening to the Lord and proclaiming His Word of hope and joy to people of every culture. May every day of your ministry among us truly be a "holy exchange of gifts" and may you receive, even as you give, grace upon grace.

We are gathered in these last hours of the Church year and eagerly anticipating another Advent and the beginning of a new year of grace. In these hours of transition, in communion with the Church throughout the world under the leadership of Pope Benedict XVI, let us remember the presence and powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Lord, Mother of the Church, and Mother of America. May the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe bless and guide us all as we share the holy gifts of God. Amen.