

Homily  
Ordination to the Priesthood  
Rev. Mr. Rich Munsell  
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To be able to speak is a gift that belongs to us as human beings. We are able to communicate our ideas, our dreams, our hopes, our visions to one another by the words we share that express our thoughts and reflections. But as human beings we speak not only through words, we speak in the multiple languages which are open to us of action, presence, support, encouragement. Often enough, the greatest communication occurs in silence.

Tonight we are a group of people who are speaking to each other in various and countless ways. We speak the language of faith that brings us from varied places and different backgrounds to this Cathedral Church of St. Ann to join in a celebration of faith. Our presence here this evening, without any words said, without any songs ~~SUNG~~, speaks a language that deafens the ears of a world which constantly looks for meaning and purpose.

We gather this evening in this Church as people gathered centuries ago on the hillsides of Judea to witness the presence and the action of the Lord Jesus. Jesus would speak a word of invitation to certain people and they would respond not only in words, but in a life-style of a commitment to follow the Lord wherever He would lead. The same dynamic occurs again this evening. Once again the Lord speaks; once again the Lord invites; once again there is a call that cries out for a response. And we are gathered here to listen to the call of Jesus to a man to come and follow him.

But Jesus speaks his words of invitation to Rich Munsell because others here this evening have also spoken words to Rich Munsell. We speak our words of support, encouragement and love to him, because ~~two~~ two people ~~spoke~~ spoke and lived love in order to share life with Rich Munsell. To Mr. and Mrs. Munsell, we owe a debt of thanks and gratitude for sharing the gift of life with their son in order that he might share the gift of life with a world which is anxious to live in a new way. To grandparents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, we also owe a debt of thanks for the words they have spoken to Rich Munsell these past 26 years, words of support, help, love, friendship, concern. And our presence here this evening as a community of faith speaks a word of hope and confidence in the Christian community to select leaders from our midst in order that the Word of God might be spoken today.

Tonight we gather for the ordination to the priesthood of Rev. Mr. Richard Frances Munsell. Tonight we continue the centuries old tradition of sharing the priesthood of Jesus Christ with another human being who is asked to continue the ministry of Jesus in the Church today. Though we all share in the priesthood of Jesus by reason of our Baptism, our Church continues the tradition of choosing and calling men to be ordained priests for service of the community.

That is why you are here this evening, Rich. You are here this evening to be ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. You are here to be officially proclaimed and anointed as a person who proclaims the Good News of the Gospel, who celebrates the Eucharist and other sacraments, and who gathers together and leads the Christian community. What will happen to you this evening cannot be earned; it is not owed you in any shape, way or fashion; it does not come as a right as a result of study and prayer. It is a response to a call of the Lord Jesus through the Church that exists in the world today.

You might well feel like the young Jeremiah who is unable to speak when confronted with the Word of God. But yet, you are asked to speak this evening. You are asked to speak words of commitment and service that reflect the words of Paul to the Corinthians and the words of Jesus to his disciples. Your word becomes your life in what is ahead of you in the days and months and years which follow tonight's celebration.

The all important word that you speak this evening, Rich, is the word of service. To speak that word, you are also asked to speak other words which enable you and empower you to be the priest in the Church today. You are asked to speak a word of commitment to the people of Eastern Montana whereby your word of service will be lived in and among this people of God in our Diocese. You are asked to speak the word of celibate love which cries out for care and concern and compassion for all people without a commitment to one. You are asked to speak a word of obedience to a Church and a Bishop whereby that word challenges you to follow not your own agenda but the agenda and guidelines and expectations of a Church. Your word of service as a priest cannot be spoken Rich, unless you are willing to speak these other words. And this is the challenge which brings you here this evening.

But so many others have helped you to come to this time and place to speak your word of service, Your parents, family, friends, your teachers, your fellow classmates and professors at the schools you attended - all of these speak in countless ways to you to enable you to speak this evening.

Richard Frances Munsell. Tonight you will be ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Tonight you are asked to give your life in service to that Church and people through the imposition of hands that I as Bishop will share with you. You are being called to be a priest. The word you speak in response will be brief and simple, but it is a word that gives your life a whole new direction. May you be filled with a love of the Church and the People of God who are the Church. May you be faithful to the promises you make this evening. May your life become a word that reflects the presence of Jesus in the world today.

Enough of words! It is time for words to become incarnate.