

(Homily of ✠Ruperto Cruz Santos, Bishop of Balanga during the Solemn Rite of Admission to the Candidacy for Holy Orders, at San Jose Seminary in Loyola Heights, Quezon City on Monday, 1st of May 2017 at six in the evening).

Reverend Father Felipe Fruto Ramirez, our beloved Rector
My brother-priests
Our dear seminarians
Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Please accept my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation for this grace to officiate the Solemn Rite of Admission for Holy Orders. Let me also take this rare opportunity to publicly express our admiration and thanksgiving for the services and sacrifices of our seminary formators and professors. As you give your time and impart your talents to these seminarians, you are blessing our Diocese with dedicated and devoted priests. Thank you so much!

Seminarians Raymond Gutang, Mark Napa and John Renil Quiliope, congratulations and best wishes. Let us give them a round of applause.

After this solemn rite of admission for Holy Orders, what will you be? Will our formation be smooth and easy? Will our studies be pleasing and rewarding? Will we surely become priests someday? No, it is not. You still have to prepare and perform your tasks and duties. There are still works to do, classes to attend, and examinations to pass.

But to make this Admission to Ordination let us reflect to what our Patron, Saint Joseph did and lived. These are the following:

Saint Joseph trusted God.
Saint Joseph has always the time.
Saint Joseph took up Mary and Jesus.

First. Saint Joseph always put his trust to God. The faith of Saint Joseph was tested. He was troubled. How could be Mary be with a child? But when an angel explained to him in a dream that it was "*through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived*" (Matthew 1,20), Joseph consented. He trusted and cooperated with God's redemptive plan.

My dear seminarians, to trust God is surrender everything, even our family and future. To trust God is to renounce what we are and who we are, and we rely everything to Him. This was what Joseph did. Emptying himself of everything, Joseph conformed himself to God.

Surely, like Saint Joseph, you have personal plans. But when God calls you, like Saint Joseph, you have to abandon your personal plans and agenda, and accept what God wants from you and trust where God calls you. With this solemn admission, like Saint Joseph, surrender yourselves to God and cooperate with God.

Saint Joseph was asked to leave his home country with his family to travel to an unknown land, devoid of any assurance of caring welcome. But out of obedience, for the safety of Jesus and with unconditional trust in God's providence, Joseph "*took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt*" (Matthew 2,14).

Likewise, we could be asked to go, or to move forward, or to do something. With our trust, we obey. Let us follow orders. We fulfill what is being asked from us. And at the culmination our seminary formation God will surely choose us and commission us in His vineyard.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola reminds us, "*act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God.*"

Second, is time. Saint Joseph has always time for God. Joseph was a carpenter. Being silent, he could be very absorbed with his works, very much serious with his labors. There could be many demands. And yet he has still time for God. He listened attentively to the messages of the angel. He followed what God wanted him to do. There was no questioning on his part, no single word of complaint. Joseph his time to God, his very self for service of God.

My dear seminarians, we could be very busy with our studies. We could also be very preoccupied with our pastoral works. And there could also be many people to attend to, or to be with.

But like Saint Joseph let us set aside time for God. And so don't neglect your prayers. Don't forget your Spiritual Exercises. Be with God before the Blessed Sacrament. Be always present at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Don't absent yourselves from monthly recollection or from annual retreat. And go to Holy Confession constantly.

Let us keep in mind what Saint Ignatius is urging us, "*try to keep your soul in peace and quiet, always ready for whatever our Lord may wish to work in you. It is certainly a higher virtue of the soul, and a greater grace, to be able to enjoy the Lord in different times and different places than in only one.*"

Lastly is to take. Reflecting with the commands given to Saint Joseph, the most common word is to "*take.*" The angel told Joseph "*do not be afraid to take Mary*" (Matthew 1,20). When the life of the newborn Jesus was threatened with death, Joseph was asked "*rise, and take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt*" (Matthew 2,13). And with the death of King Herod, Joseph was again commanded to "*rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel*" (Matthew 2,20).

Now with our priestly formation, my dear seminarians, we must also take Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary into our hearts. We make Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary alive in our lives, ever present in all we do and say. And it should be Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary whom we have to bring and share to our people.

As we advance in theological knowledge and become eloquent in homiletics, it is not how good or effective we are, which our people wants to see or hear from us. But it should and must be Jesus and Mary.

My dear seminarians go and take always Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. And our Lord Jesus and His Blessed Mother Mary will surely take us from today's solemn rite of Admission to the sacred order of the Priesthood.

✠Ruperto Cruz Santos, DD
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