

Instituted Ministry of Acolyte

February 4, 2017

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Readings: Ex 16: 2-4, 12-15
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 6: 24-35

Tonight's **institution of acolytes** is a call from the Church to those receiving this ministry, **to go deeper** in their liturgical formation. While this rite of institution is reserved solely to candidates for Holy Orders, it is an invitation to these men to embrace this liturgical ministry in order to allow their devotion of the Eucharist **to become a richer source of spiritual nourishment** so that they can intentionally love the Mystical Body of Christ, the People of God, especially the weak and the sick;ⁱ **and by example**, witness to the beauty and mystery of the liturgy in order to help others participate in these sacred mysteries. In other words, you are being instituted with certain responsibilities of service in the liturgy, so that you can *be transformed inwardly* in order *to outwardly* serve God's people.

Consider Paul's letter to the Corinthians; he is giving to his community what he has received from the Lord. I suspect that he is not simply passing along a living tradition of Eucharistic remembrance that illustrates the mind of Christ on the night before he was handed over. He is presenting to the Church of Corinth -- the living person who radically changed the course of his life; the Jesus Christ he knows inwardly in his heart. The

Jesus Christ who took bread and wine and made it live and breathe his presence in order to be real food and drink.

Paul knows he has Jesus in him, so he can give his message to people without reservation. Paul will proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes –because there is an intimate relationship fortified through a sublime faith in one who called him and sent him from that pivotal moment on the road of Damascus. Paul embraced Christ, he allowed Christ to change him and transform him. For Paul, for him to live –is Christ!

Brothers, tonight the Church ask you to offer yourselves entirely to God so that you will form others through your witness and example. You, like Paul must catechize others by your fidelity to the Eucharistic sacrifice, through your participation in the Mass, you will teach by example. Live Jesus' sacrifice in your person. Because then, you will not be afraid to be broken at times and to pour yourself out to others, because he lives within you and abides in you in the vessel of your heart! This will inspire and make credible your service at the altar, and when you present the Lord's Body and Blood to others, you will give Him as one you know and believe in. What you have received, you will give! With authenticity, like Moses you will be able to say "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." Because you will know personally who it is, in the gift of this heavenly bread and you will know too well his

desire to have you eat his body and blood. The gospel tonight challenges all of us in the assembly to eat and drink his body and blood in order to have him remain in us! This desire is a command by the Lord. His words reveal the hunger and thirst of God for each of us. God desires to fill all of our hungers and thirst in life. We must eat, drink or in John's exact words "devour" the flesh of the one who is the Life for the World.

And so brothers about to be instituted into a liturgical ministry of service, allow the bread you have prepared at the table of the word to fill your hearts. "Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church!"ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Pope Paul VI, August 15, 1972. Apostolic Letter *Ministeria quaedam* and from the Rite itself.

ⁱⁱ Pontifical Ritual for Institution to the Ministry of Acolyte p.248