

**Homily for the Ordination of
Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk to the Sacred Order of Priests**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

Saturday, May 2, 2020

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear priests, deacons, consecrated religious, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

One of the most pleasant duties and indeed one of the happiest occasions in the ministry of every bishop is the ordination of new priests. It certainly is a great blessing for me and for our diocese to celebrate today the priestly ordination of Deacons Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk to the Sacred Order of Priests of the Catholic Church in service of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. The clergy, religious and lay Christian faithful of our diocese join me in praying that the graces imparted in this Sacrament of Holy Orders will bear abundant fruit in the ministry of soon-to-be Fathers Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk throughout their lives.

We also express our gratitude to the parents and families of Deacons Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk, for giving them a solid foundation in the Catholic faith and instilling in them a missionary spirit to travel thousands

of miles to another country to preach the Good News of God's salvation and love. They are like the disciples we heard about in the Gospel of Saint Luke, as Jesus sent them out in pairs with these words, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

While I regret that the coronavirus pandemic has prevented us from gathering a large congregation for this Mass of Ordination, I am pleased that the families Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk in Poland are able to participate in this ordination liturgy by watching the live video stream online. This is a very important day for you as these sons of yours and members of your families are ordained to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

The ordination of priests is a very important moment in the life of the whole Catholic community, but especially in the life of the men to be ordained and in the life of the diocesan bishop and his presbyterate as well.

The ordination of priests is a very important moment in the life of the whole Catholic community because it is a sign of faith, hope and love. Faith, because the ordination of priests indicates that the faith is still very

much alive and well even now in the third millennium of Christianity. Hope, because the ordination of priests gives reassurance that the Word of God will continue to be preached and the mission of Jesus Christ will continue to be carried out in the world. Love, because the ordination of priests assures the community that there will be continue to be shepherds who will love the flock and care for them.

The ordination of priests is a very important moment in the life of the men to be ordained because by the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, they are signed with a special character and are so configured to Christ the High Priest that they will have the power to act in the person of Christ the Head. Deacons Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk have come to this graced moment in response to God's call as mediated by the Church after much prayer and preparation.

The ordination of priests is a very important moment in the life of the diocesan bishop and his presbyterate because priests take part in the Bishop's priesthood and mission. As virtuous co-workers with the episcopal Order, called to serve the people of God, they constitute one presbyterate in union with their Bishop, while being charged with different

duties. We are not lone rangers doing our own thing. We are collaborators in a great spiritual symphony. Without the musicians in an orchestra, the conductor can make no sound. Without the conductor, the musicians' sounds will disintegrate into a cacophony of dissonance and disharmony. Working together in concert, the Bishop and his priests can produce the "mystic chords of memory" of which the most famous person from Springfield, Illinois, President Abraham Lincoln, spoke in his First Inaugural Address one hundred and fifty-nine years ago, "stretching . . . to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land" and swelling the chorus of communion, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The ordination of a priest is also a fitting moment to ask what the community of faith asks of a priest. Saint Pope John Paul II answered that question in this way: "This is what people ask of the priest: The priest is The man of God, the one who belongs to God and makes people think about God. . . . Christians expect to find in the priest not only a man who welcomes them, who listens to them gladly and shows a real interest in them, but also and above all a man who will help them to turn to God, to

rise up to him. And so the priest needs to be trained to have a deep intimacy with God.”¹

As specific means for a priest to be “The man of God, the one who belongs to God and makes people think about God,” a priest promises to pray the Liturgy of the Hours so that the moments of his day and his ministry may be punctuated by the markers of God’s active involvement in the unfolding of our lives. By the promise to live in chaste celibacy, a priest resolves, in the words of Saint John Paul II, to take on “the likeness of Jesus Christ, the good shepherd and spouse of the Church, and therefore as a choice of a greater and undivided love for Christ and His Church, as a full and joyful availability in his heart for the pastoral ministry.”² A priest also promises obedience in order to be open to hearing God’s call as prayerfully discerned by the diocesan Bishop in consultation with his advisors and the priest himself, so that the needs of the diocese will be properly served and the mission of Christ will be effectively embraced.

Paweł and Piotr, this is the vocation that you are called to embrace with joy, this is the faith that you are called to proclaim, this is the salvation that you are called to announce as Good News to all the world. Thank you

for saying yes to this divine vocation. We prayerfully beg the Lord to strengthen you with the grace of this sacrament of Holy Orders to carry out these sacred tasks with energy, excitement and enthusiasm.

The ordination of a priest is not just a time to ask what the Church expects of a priest, but also what the priest can expect from the Church. In that regard, my friends, as Bishop, I ask you to pray for priests; pray especially today for these men, Paweł Łuczak and Piotr Kosk, soon to be Father Paweł Łuczak and Father Piotr Kosk; be with them, care for them, work with them, support them, but most of all, love them, as Christ loves you, for as I say in my Episcopal motto, *Lex Cordis Caritas*, "The Law of the Heart is Love."

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 47.

² Saint John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 50.