



The homily of Bishop Thomas Thai Thanh Nguyen, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Orange, at the December 17, 2022 ordination of Fr. Henry Nguyen, SCJ

Dear Bishop Brown, Father Provincial, Monsignor Tuan and all concelebrating priests, deacons, religious and all the faithful present in this celebration and especially you, my dear brother Henry who is about to be ordained, I want to welcome all of you here in this St Columban Catholic Church. This is a beautiful day in the life of the family of God here in this parish as well as in the life of the Sacred Heart Community.

Let me begin with the words of wisdom of St John Vianney, the patron saint of priests in his beautiful catechesis on priesthood,

“oh, how great is a priest! The priest has the key of heavenly treasures; it is he who opens the door; he is the steward of the good God, the distributor of His wealth. Without the priest, the Death and Passion of our Lord would be of no avail..the priest is not a priest for himself; he does not give himself absolution; he does not administer the sacraments to himself. He is not for himself, he is for you... the priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus. When you see the priest, think of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (St John Vianney, Little Catechism)

Brother Henry, a priest should always be transparent. People should be able to “see right through you,” and through you, see the love of Christ. Before all else, you must “be Jesus” for

your people. Not only when you proclaim his Word, or celebrate the sacred mysteries at the altar. But in all things.

Brother Henry, allow me to offer two advices as we prepare to confer this holy sacrament upon you.

First, always seek the heart of Christ. You and I live in an ever-increasing electronic age. We are such a numbered people : checkbook numbers, driver's license numbers, social security numbers, credit card numbers. We have been reduced to numbers. People in concentration camps like Hitler's had numbers tattooed on their arms. These prisoners were not human being with names, but faceless, impersonal numbers. It makes it easier to hate and kill numbers. All abstractions. Easy to dismiss. Easy to hate. Easy to kill.

But today's Gospel calls us to be different, calls us to be counter-cultural. What did we hear in today's Gospel?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd wants to have an intimate relationship with each one of us, his sheep. He knows us. He calls us by name. He loves us to the point of laying his life for us. He wants to have intimate relationship with us.

So for you. Be counter-cultural. Always open your heart to the heart of Jesus and ask Him to fill your heart with His shepherding love. Be a leader who is interested in the flock. Be a leader who bring all together "One flock one shepherd". Be a leader who can hold the helm not only when the sea is calm but also when there is storm in the sea. Be a leader who smell your sheep. Love with the heart of Jesus and carry out your daily ministry in quiet acts of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness.

Second advice: Love the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ! Make the celebration of the Eucharist the center of each day. Live for the Mass, and live from the Mass!

At the altar, you are truly Christ, standing *in persona Christi*. Never take this for granted! Always do holy things in a holy way, knowing that in your hands you hold the bread of eternal life!

Brother Henry, our prayer is that you stay close always to our Blessed Mother Mary. Call on her as a child, love her as your mother. We ask her intercession now for your priesthood. Through Mary, may you draw closer to her Son and become ever more like him.