

**EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF BISHOP STEPHEN ROBSON
ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH
SATURDAY 9TH JUNE 2012**

HOMILY PREACHED BY CARDINAL KEITH PATRICK O'BRIEN

INTRODUCTION:

At this part of our Mass of Episcopal Ordination, having invoked the help of the Holy Spirit, and listened to the mandate from the Holy See, I as the Principle Consecrator of the new Bishop am asked to address the gathering briefly on the duties of a Bishop.

WHAT IS A BISHOP:

When we consider just what a Bishop is we first of all listen to the **Word of God in Sacred Scripture**. We know that it was Jesus himself who sent his 12 apostles into the world; their responsibility was to preach and teach; and because their apostolate was to continue to the end of time, the Apostles selected others to help them.

Consequently **a Bishop is a successor of the Apostles** who through his ministry brings the on-going teaching of Jesus Christ to the world and confers the mysteries of faith on those who believe. Through a Bishop's wisdom and prudence Christ guides the people of God on their earthly pilgrimage toward eternal happiness.

The on-going teaching of the Church down through the centuries and right to the present time through the **teaching of the Second Vatican Council** further explains what a Bishop is.

He is one who shares in the **fullness of the Priesthood** through the three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders namely diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate. One who receives the Sacrament of Holy Orders is consecrated in Christ's name "to feed the Church by the Word and Grace of God". Through the ordained ministry the presence of Christ as Head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers. In the beautiful expression of St Ignatius of Antioch, **the Bishop is "like the living image of God the Father"**.

And the Second Vatican Council goes on to teach that "the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness namely which, both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and the language of the Fathers of the Church, is called the High Priesthood, the acme (summa) of the sacred ministry".

It is through ordination as a Bishop that one is constituted a member of the episcopal body, referred to in the new translation of the Missal as a member of the "Order of Bishops". The character and collegial nature of the episcopal order are evidenced among other ways by the Church's ancient practice which calls for several bishops to participate in the consecration of a new bishop – shown by the act of the laying on of hands.

WHAT IS AN AUXILIARY BISHOP:

We might then ask what is an **auxiliary bishop**? Or what is the **bishop of a Titular See**?

While our catechism of the Catholic Church and our solemn liturgy do not speak of an “auxiliary bishop” it is in the **Code of Canon Law** that we read of this expression “auxiliary bishop”.

We are taught that it is when the pastoral needs of the diocese require it one or more auxiliary bishops are to be appointed at the request of the diocesan bishop. It is the auxiliary bishop who assists the diocesan bishop in the entire governance of the diocese and takes his place when he is absent or impeded. And it is the auxiliary bishop since he is called to share in the cares of the diocesan bishop who should so exercise his office that he acts and thinks in accord with him.

I emphasise to you that first and foremost **an auxiliary bishop is indeed a bishop possessing the fullness of Holy Orders, who is a successor to the Apostles, and who is indeed a member of the College of Bishops in our country and a member of the “Order of Bishops” throughout the world.** Even Cardinals, newly created by a Pope while still priests, are offered Ordination as a Bishop if they wish to be a member of the Order of Bishops and take part in a Council of the Church.

He is not an upgraded Monsignor, nor a super chancellor – and far less is he a curate of a Cardinal! He is a Bishop in his own right, but having responsibility of assisting a diocesan bishop in his diocese and being a full member of the College of Bishops wherever he is. He is given the title of a Titular See, a Diocese which no longer exists, as with Bishop Stephen’s Titular Diocese of Tunnana in North Africa. He is given the title to further indicate his role as a bishop.

His responsibilities are those of a diocesan bishop as spelled out in the Rite of Ordination. “He is to love the priests and deacons who share with him the ministry of Christ; love the poor and infirm, strangers and the homeless; encourage the faithful and listen willingly to what they have to say; he is never to relax his concern for those who do not yet belong to the one fold of Christ; he is to have a constant concern for all the Churches and gladly come to the aid and support of Churches in need”.

It is indeed a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of any man and I know that Stephen is fully aware of these responsibilities.

BISHOP STEPHEN ROBSON:

I myself have known our soon-to-be Bishop Stephen for some 35 years and he knows me equally well. Some of you here today have known him for a longer time – and it must be a great joy for our new Bishop to have both his parents here with him today for this Ordination. I do commend him to you and I publicly state that I am more than happy that our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has appointed him to assist me in my own service in this Archdiocese.

He has chosen as his motto “Peregrinatio pro Christo”; “On Pilgrimage for Christ”. Those words sum up the intentions which he has as he tries to fulfil the remit of being a Bishop and serving as an assistant Bishop in this Archdiocese.

His own pilgrimage for Christ began, as you will see on the back of his ordination card, with his baptism on 15th May 1951; that entry into Christ, with his commitment to Christ and Christ’s people, continued with his reception of the diaconate on 12th February 1978 and of Priesthood on 17th March 1979. That commitment and love of Christ and of others, now deepens ever more wonderfully as he prepares to receive the fullness of the Priesthood in this Sacrament of Holy Orders and becomes a successor of the Apostles.

May God indeed bless him to the full on this occasion and may you the people of God in this Archdiocese and throughout our country receive him as you are asked to do by our Church “gladly and gratefully” as he continues with us and for us on his pilgrimage for Christ.