

40th anniversary remarks to priests

Thank you, my brothers, for the example of your ministry and the support you continue to give.

In the Rites of Ordination, the Introduction to the Ordination of Priests says this in paragraph 105: “Priests present at the celebration of an Ordination... lay hands on the candidates together with the Bishop, ‘because of the common spirit they share as Priests.’” That quote within the quote comes from the *Apostolic Tradition*, the same source from the fourth century or so that supplies the foundation for Eucharistic Prayer II and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. Some of the earliest evidence we have of priests, then, is that they shared a common spirit, and we share that spirit with newly ordained when we impose hands on them.

We then offer a sign of peace. When the bishop does this, he says to the newly ordained, “Peace be with you,” but the rite doesn’t tell the rest of us what to say. I usually say, “Peace,” because it’s what I truly wish the new priest will experience throughout his ministry, but it would be as fitting to say something like, “Welcome to the presbyterate,” because of the common spirit we share.

On my ordination day with my lifelong friend Joe Powers 40 years ago this month I was deeply moved by the stream of priests who poured out their spirit upon me through the laying on of hands and the fraternal embrace. Many of them have died, but their spirit lives within me. When a new ordination class enters the cathedral I have the same happy duty to share my spirit with them. I only hope I share my good spirit, and not my mistakes. Each ordination class in turn has generously given back to me. I am continually inspired by the exceptional ministry I witness in you, my brother priests - your steady dedication to prayer and faithful service to the people of God.

I can honestly say I’ve been happy to be a priest for each day of those 40 years. There has been work I did not want to do, but graces I never dreamed I’d get. One of those is the spirit that you have shared with me, and for that, I say thanks.

Wednesday, May 1, 2019