



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Episcopal Ordination of the Most Reverend Stephen Andrew Hero
Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Homily

[*Hosea 11:1-4, 8ac-9; Isaiah 12; Ephesians 3:8-12, 14-19; John 19: 31-37*]

It feels like quite a while has passed since we heard the announcement that Pope Francis had named Father Stephen Hero as the new Bishop of Prince Albert. With that news came the realization that our very good and beloved Bishop Thévenot will be succeeded by another, who will also be a very good Bishop, and whom you will all quickly grow to love. The time between the announcement and this ordination day has been filled – I believe it is accurate to say - with gratitude and joy.

Rightly so. Notre joie grandit devant cette confirmation de la fidélité du Seigneur à son Église. Aujourd'hui, la solennité du Sacré-Cœur proclame la merveille de l'amour de Dieu, pleinement révélée dans le cœur de Jésus Christ. Des siècles avant la venue du Seigneur, Dieu avait promis par la bouche d'Osée que, précisément à cause de son amour, jamais il ne pourrait se détourner de son peuple, même si celui-ci devait souvent lui tourner le dos. The steadfast fidelity of God, made manifest in the heart of His Son, continues to show itself in myriad ways, not the least of which is the appointment of a Shepherd to guide and care for His people. With deep thanksgiving, we welcome Bishop Hero, sent to remind and assure us, by his own faithful service, of the unwavering fidelity of our God.

I daresay we are in strong need of that assurance at the present moment. While it is accurate to say that our hearts are full of joy as we greet our new Shepherd, we also know they are simultaneously filled with deep sadness. As the country still reels in sorrow and anger at the discovery of Indigenous children's remains in Kamloops, we find ourselves in shock yet again by news of the murder this week of a Muslim family in London. Words fail us, as we strive to capture what we are feeling in response to the tragedies. In my estimation, what we are each experiencing is the pain that arises from a heart that has pierced by sorrow and pain.

On this Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, our wounded hearts meet that of Jesus Christ, itself pierced, yes, by a soldier's lance, but more by an ineffable sorrow at the sin and suffering of God's people. It is, most deeply of all, a heart pierced through by a love beyond imagining, a love that, when it touches our own sorrowing hearts, brings them healing and restores them to peace.

This mystery of the Sacred Heart reveals what must also be the heart of the Bishop. He who by ordination stands as Vicar of Christ for the people of his Diocese must be a man who allows his own heart to be pierced by their cares, concerns, hardships and struggles, so that, from his heart, he can bring to them the healing balm of the Gospel. Precisely in this way does he carry out the apostolic ministry to which he succeeds by the laying on of hands. That ministry, we hear from the Apostle Paul, is to announce the infinite love of Christ and the mystery of God's plan fulfilled in His Son. Since Christ

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himself both revealed and fulfilled that plan by his pierced heart, so, too must his apostle, the Bishop, make known the love of God by disposing his own heart to be wounded by the suffering of the people entrusted to his care.

Anyone familiar with Stephen Hero will have long recognized within him that pastoral heart necessary in all ministers of the Gospel. The people of this Diocese can know with certainty that their new Shepherd, like their previous Bishop, is one whose heart conforms to that of the Good Shepherd. Moreover, you will find a trustworthy spiritual guide eager to help you all in the formation of your own hearts. After all, the formation of hearts has been his ministry for many years. As Rector of Saint Joseph's Seminary and a long-serving member of its formation team, he has helped to shape the hearts of many men discerning a call to priesthood, so that God's people would be given shepherds after the heart of Christ. In fact, it occurs to me that some of the priests of this Diocese would have been in seminary during Bishop Hero's tenure. No doubt they are now praying feverishly that their new Bishop's memory is not too keen.

That for which we should all be praying fervently, not only now but also daily, is that Bishop Hero's capacity for recall will never allow him to forget the love of the Lord for him and for his people assembled in the local Church of Prince Albert. The responsibility placed upon his shoulders will weigh heavily by times, and the challenges facing him are many, often seemingly insoluble. What gives strength, resolve, hope and joy is remembrance of the love of the Lord and the fidelity of God to His people. We hear God pledge through Hosea always to be in the midst of His people, acting with tenderness, compassion and love. Remembering that love and trusting in that promise gives to the Bishop all the surety needed to execute the episcopal ministry entrusted to him.

Monseigneur Hero, nous prions pour vous, nous faisons nôtre cet après-midi la prière de saint Paul. Avec l'Apôtre, nous prions pour notre nouvel apôtre, et nous demandons à Dieu « que, par la puissance de son Esprit, se fortifie en vous l'homme intérieur et que le Christ habite en votre cœur par la foi afin que vous restiez enraciné dans l'amour, établi dans l'amour ». Thank you for saying yes to the Lord, who has called you to this place at this moment. The people of God welcome you with joy, and look forward with eager anticipation to the many blessings the Lord will shower upon this Diocese from his Sacred Heart through your episcopal ministry.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton
Sacred Heart Cathedral, Prince Albert
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