

**ORDINATION OF THE MOST REVEREND STEVEN J. LOPES  
AS BISHOP OF THE PERSONAL ORDINARIATE OF THE  
CHAIR OF SAINT PETER**

**Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart  
Houston, Texas  
February 2, 2016**

Today is Candlemas Day, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. As the ritual for the blessing of candles, celebrated at the beginning of Mass in many of our churches this morning, reminds us, "forty days have passed since we celebrated the joyful feast of [Christmas]. Today is the blessed day when Jesus was presented in the Temple by Mary and Joseph. Outwardly he was fulfilling the Law, but in reality he was coming to meet his believing people." Among the "believing people" he met in the Jerusalem Temple, the names of Simeon and Anna have sounded down the ages.

But the liturgy is not simply about a past event. On Candlemas Day in this year of grace 2016 Jesus has come again to meet his believing people in Word and Sacrament. The "people of faith" Jesus has come to meet today is us, you and me, the Church, and the name that will go forward from this encounter with Christ is that of Steven Joseph Lopes. This evening the prayer in our hearts and on our lips will be for him: in praying for him we can be confident that God's blessing will not be wanting for us as well, as Christ has promised.

Candlemas Day traditionally marks the end of the Christmas season. Today we come to this temple of Sacred Heart Cathedral in Houston with a Christmas-like joy, in prayerful thanksgiving to God, for the ordination of Bishop-elect Lopes, a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, as Bishop Ordinary of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter. His ordination is part of the ongoing implementation of Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus*. The Constitution's principles have been made concrete through the establishment thus far of three Personal Ordinariates -- in England, in Australia, and in the United States and Canada. Already we can see how this initiative has provided a new path to the realization of full Christian unity -- a unity that both the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have made the object of their fervent prayers and inter-church dialogue in the ecumenical developments of the past century.

*Anglicanorum Coetibus* does this by encouraging groups of former Anglicans to preserve the traditions, rituals and customs that build up the unity of the Church, that indeed enrich her, in accord with the teaching of the Apostle Paul, who reminds us in his Letter to the Ephesians that we "have been called to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Paul goes on to say, "There is one body and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism -- one God and Father of us all" (4:5-6).

Let us rejoice that as Christians who grew up separated from each other, we can now profess together the "one Lord" and "one faith," and celebrate together our "one baptism" in one Eucharistic communion. I want to voice our common gratitude to Pope Francis for the appointment of Bishop Lopes to guide the ongoing development initiated by *Anglicanorum Coetibus* here in the United States and Canada. This initiative provides a new witness to the Church's broad ecumenical vision, and a new strength for her mission of evangelization, according to the commission Jesus gave to his first Apostles: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15).

Just as Christ sent the twelve Apostles into the world to continue his mission, with Peter as the head of the "Apostolic College", so too the Apostles chose helpers and successors for themselves, so that this mission might continue to the end of time. As Jesus told his Apostles at the Last Supper, "I will pray [to] the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you forever ... the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:16-17). Through the laying on of hands, by which the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred, those first Apostles handed on to their successors the gift of the Holy Spirit, which they themselves had received from Christ. The many Bishops who join in this evening's ordination are visible representatives of the Apostolic College into which the Church ordains Bishop Lopes.

The Second Vatican Council, the 50th anniversary of whose conclusion we marked this past December 8, taught that Bishops serve the Church by a threefold ministry. They are teachers of the faith, priests for the sanctification of God's holy People, and shepherds who oversee the Church's growth in faith and charity by protecting the flock entrusted to their care and leading it to good pasture.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is a particularly apt occasion for the celebration of a bishop's ordination. The readings of the Word of God on this Feast can help us deepen our appreciation of the ministry to which our Lord now calls Bishop Lopes. In today's Gospel we hear Simeon's prophetic words, "my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel." Christ himself proclaimed, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

The theme of light runs through the liturgy of the Christmas season: the shepherds in the fields around Bethlehem marveled to see the heavens ablaze with light as the angel announced the birth of the Messiah to them; the Magi came from the East to Bethlehem guided by the light of a star. At Mass on Christmas day, the Prologue of John's Gospel is read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Any believer who hears these words must think immediately of the first words of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and said, let there be light" (Gen. 1:1,3). There is a cosmic significance in the image of

Christ the light: he who was at the Father's side in the work of creation, is now poised to begin his mission in time, the work of the new creation.

How is Christ a light for us today? one may ask. By the light of faith! As the Catechism reminds us, "Faith is our response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to us, at the same time bringing us a superabundant light as we search for the ultimate meaning of our life" (n. 26). This light does not destroy our faculties of mind and reason. Rather it gives new dimension to seeing reality and knowing the truth.

During the coming ordination rite, when we see the open book of the Gospels placed over Bishop Lopes's head as he kneels during the prayer of consecration, it cannot help but remind us of the important role the bishop has as teacher of the truth of God's holy word. In his ministry as a priest, Fr. Lopes has used his theological expertise to guide the growth in faith of the people entrusted to his care, both pastorally and academically. Moreover, he has spent a decade in the work of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose task it is to serve the Holy Father and the Church throughout the world in protecting and promoting the doctrine of the faith. During his service as an Official of the Congregation he has been involved the discussions with groups of Anglicans leading up to *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, as well as in the work of its implementation, thus ensuring his ample preparation for his new task.

At the Last Supper, Christ prayed to his heavenly Father to "consecrate his apostles in truth." We should renew that prayer today for this new successor of the first Apostles, for no one can deny the challenges to the truth of the Gospel in our increasingly secularized world. Some are indifferent to God's mercy and love, others openly reject the idea of faith as a new kind of slavery, still others deny the possibility of knowing the truth at all. In addition to such theoretical challenges, there are those who live lives without respect for the moral values taught by Christ and handed down from generation to generation through the teaching of the Church. In this regard, both the Anglican and Catholic traditions have historically been strong, through theology and apologetics, in showing how faith and reason help us see the goodness and beauty of God's divine plan. To know God's purpose in creating and redeeming us, and to be able to explain and defend it, are more than ever necessary today for the Church's mission to the world.

There is a beautiful meditation in the Divine office for the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, taken from a sermon of Bishop St. Gregory Nazianzus (4th century: Father of the Church, brother of St. Basil the Great), who says, "Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed in light. ... He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world. You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven."

In today's second reading taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, we heard that Jesus "had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" (Hebr 2:17). The Bishop ordains priests to share in his sacramental mission, and in particular to offer "sacrifice in the temple," uniting us – his "believing people" – with Christ's permanent sacrifice offered once for all on the Cross, which is renewed in every Mass for the sake of our redemption, and to advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

Since earliest times, anointing with oil has been the special sign of the consecration of priests, to conduct the temple sacrifices on behalf of the people of God. So Aaron, the brother of Moses, was anointed till the oil ran down upon his beard (cf. Ps 133:2). The Bishop anoints the hands of the priest at his ordination, a sign of their use as precious instruments in changing the bread and wine brought to the altar of sacrifice into the Body and Blood of Christ.

In the years since I laid my hands on Fr. Steven Lopes's head, and anointed his hands in priestly ordination at St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco in 2001, he has dedicated himself in priestly service to the People of God. Today his head will be anointed with chrism, a ritual that signifies the total consecration of the person of the bishop; the Council says the Bishop acts "*in persona Christi*" – in the person of Christ, the Good Shepherd, in this work of sanctification of the Body of Christ, the Church (LG 21).

It was the first reading today from the book of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus himself read in the synagogue at Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor ..." After reading this, Jesus said "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:18). This took place at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. He had come to Nazareth, his home town, from the banks of the Jordan River where he had been baptized. There, as we read in Matthew's Gospel, when Jesus came out of the water, "the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven saying 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" (Mt 3:16-17)

The manifestations of the Holy Spirit are not ours to manage or control. But the Spirit is at work, according to God's promise. Recall how God had instructed his prophet Samuel to anoint a new king for Israel, to replace Saul who had disobeyed the Lord. When David appeared, "the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he!' Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord [rushed] upon David from that day forward" (Sm 16:12-13). Remember too the dramatic scene at Pentecost, when "suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2-4).

In today's ordination rite the Holy Spirit will be invoked upon Bishop Lopes in various words and gestures, by the laying on of hands and the anointing of his head with chrism. Bishop Lopes, this "mystical anointing" intends to signify – both to you and to the Church – that the Spirit poured out upon God's "Beloved Son" and given by him to the first Apostles now takes possession of you as his chosen instrument in guiding his Church. In my celebrations of the ("Pentecost") sacrament of Confirmation over the past almost 33 years, I have often taken the occasion to remind the young people that the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament is only the first chapter of the book of salvation history that is still being written by the Holy Spirit, over space and time, through the ministry of the Church in the world. These are the chapters that will tell the story of our faith, and the love of neighbor that flows from the love of God in our hearts, as the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

How can we be sure – indeed, Bishop, how can you be sure – that the "governing Spirit" given to you this evening will remain the guiding Spirit for you as you guide the Church? History knows sadly enough of the human failures, in which the prayer of Christ to the Father can be overturned: "Not Thy will, but mine be done!" Obedience to the will of God is the key; and the guarantor of such obedience is humility, a virtue to which you yourself alluded in your remarks on the day your appointment as Bishop was announced.

In just a few moments Bishop Lopes will lie prostrate on the sanctuary floor, with his face to the ground, as the Church prays the Litany of the Saints, invoking the help of all heaven upon him and his ministry as Bishop. The Latin word for "ground" is *humus*, which is the root of the English word humility. This prostration on the ground is a sign of the humility that is intrinsically linked to the exercise of authority in the Church. The governing Spirit means that the Bishop has the authority to govern in the Church, and to govern the Church. But this authority is not for the sake of power or domination, but for service. Our Lord is clear about his expectations: recall the occasion when two of the apostles, James and John, asked for places at his right and left in his kingdom. Jesus gave them this admonition: "You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve – to give his life in ransom for the many" (Mk 10:42-45).

The authority given to the Bishop is not that of a CEO; it is not primarily an organizational responsibility, although it will no doubt include aspects of that. No, it is modeled on the humility of Christ himself, who – as we read in St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and

became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-11). So we should see the “governing Spirit” given to the Bishop in Holy Orders as a gift for the Church, whose mission seeks to convince mankind of its own true purpose – to become a civilization of love.

Bishop Steven Lopes, dear brother in Christ, how happy we are to be here today with you as these sacred mysteries unfold, in accord with God’s plan and accompanied by our humble but fervent prayers. May the grace of God give you long life, and many years of faithful and loving ministry among us as Bishop in the Church. Ad multos annos!

**William Cardinal Levada**  
**Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith**  
**Archbishop Emeritus of San Francisco**