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Bishop

Diocese Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Ordination to the Priesthood of

Stephen E. Hansen, Justin E. Hoyer and Steven C. Rogers

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

June 3, 2006

Acts 10:37-43

1 Timothy 4:12-16

John 15: 9-17

To the Congregation

[Beloved brothers and sisters: because these our sons, Stephen Hansen, Justin Hoyer, and Steven Rogers, who are your relatives and friends, are now to be advanced to the Order of Priests, consider carefully the nature of the rank in the Church to which they are about to be raised.

It is true that God has made His entire holy people a royal priesthood in Christ. Nevertheless, our great Priest Himself, Jesus Christ, chose certain disciples to carry out publicly in His name, and on behalf of mankind, a priestly office in the Church. For Christ was sent by the Father, and He, in turn, sent the apostles into the world, so that through them and their successors, the bishops, He might continue to exercise His office of Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd. Indeed, priests are established co-workers of the Order of Bishops, with whom they are joined in the priestly office and with whom they are called to the service of the people of God.]

[After mature deliberation, these, our brothers, are now to be ordained to the priesthood in the Order of the Presbyterate so as to serve Christ the Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd, by whose ministry His Body, that is, the Church, is built and grows into the people of God, a holy temple.]

[In being configured to Christ the eternal High Priest and joined to the priesthood of the Bishops, they will be consecrated as true priests of the New Testament, to preach the Gospel, to shepherd God's people, and to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy, especially the Lord's sacrifice.]

This is a holy and sacred ministry for which our sons and brothers are about to be consecrated. Pray for them daily so that they may be good and holy shepherds of God's people. Because the ministry of the ordained priest is indispensable, pray also that other men will be called by God to the priesthood, and that they will respond to this vocation with generosity and

trust.

In the name of our Diocese, I express sincere gratitude to the parents and families of these men who are about to be ordained, to their parish priests, to their relatives and friends, to the faculty and staff of the Seminaries that have been responsible for their formation, and to all who have assisted them in saying “yes” to God’s call. I am grateful also to our diocesan Vocation office and to Bishop Boland who helped to nurture these vocations. I commend these men to the Presbyterate – the priestly fraternity – of which they will be a part. I know our priests welcome them as new brothers and will also draw from them a fresh zeal and enthusiasm for their priestly work. May Our Lord reward you all for your faith filled love, for your gracious assistance and support for Stephen, Justin, and Steven.

To the Candidates

[Now, dear sons, you are to be raised to the Order of the Priesthood. For your part, you will exercise the sacred duty of teaching in the name of Christ the Teacher. Impart to everyone the Word of God which you have received with joy. Meditating on the law of the Lord, see that you believe what you read, that you teach what you believe, and that you practice what you teach.]

In today’s second reading, St. Paul instructs Timothy to attend to his “reading, exhortation and teaching.” Accordingly, He tells Timothy to be “absorbed” in these matters, giving himself to them with attention and perseverance.

Dear brothers, the People of God look to you to be dependable teachers who hand on faithfully the Church’s Tradition. Paul says that this is a matter of “**salvation**” for “yourself and those who listen to you.” We must never weaken or dilute the mandate of the Gospel as entrusted to the Magisterium and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. Faithfully guard and transmit the whole deposit of faith which is entrusted to you as Catholic pastors and teachers.

Be trustworthy sons of the Holy Father, who, as Bishop of Rome and successor to St. Peter, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the bishops and the whole company of the faithful.” (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 23)

[In this way, let what you teach be nourishment for the people of God. Let the holiness of your lives be a delightful fragrance to Christ’s faithful, so that by word and example you may build

up the house which is God's Church.]

[Likewise, you will exercise in Christ the office of sanctifying. For, by your ministry, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful will be made perfect, being united to the sacrifice of Christ, which will be offered through your hands in an unbloody way on the altar, in union with the faithful, in the celebration of the sacraments. Understand, therefore, what you do and imitate what you celebrate. As celebrants of the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, strive to put to death whatever in your members is sinful, and to walk in newness of life.]

[Remember, when you gather others into the people of God through Baptism, and when you forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church in the Sacrament of Penance; when you comfort the sick with holy oil and celebrate the sacred rites, when you offer prayers of praise and thanks to God throughout the hours of the day, not only for the people of God but for the whole world – remember then that you are taken from among men and appointed on their behalf for those things that pertain to God. Therefore, carry out the ministry of Christ the Priest with constant joy and genuine love, attending not to your own concerns but to those of Jesus Christ.]

Take care always, therefore, to prepare well the celebration of the Sacraments and the sacramentals. By your attention to the Church's liturgical books and by your reverence in carrying out the sacred rites, assist the faithful to recognize more clearly Jesus Christ who alone makes the people holy through prayer and the Sacraments.

Above all be filled with wonder and awe at the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, from which flows the life of the Church and which is the *primary source of the priest's pastoral love*.

(*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 14) See in the daily offering of Holy Mass your identity as priests and your greatest service to God's holy people. By the manner of your celebration of the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments, the faithful will understand most fully the transcendent truths of the faith. Your priestly service at the altar can bring many to Jesus Christ and the Church. In the purity of the Sacred Mysteries celebrated with integrity and a deep commitment to the Church's maternal prerogative, you will be fit instruments for the transmission of the supernatural riches of the Church.

Devote yourself to daily prayer before the Eucharistic Lord, so that you will know Jesus Christ

and allow His love to infuse and perfect your own human love. Pray before Mass. Pray in thanksgiving after Mass. Though you never do this for show, do not hesitate to let your parishioners see you as a man of prayer. They will be inspired both to pray more fervently themselves and also to pray for your perseverance. Your priesthood is for life – indeed for all eternity! You will need this dynamic connection to Jesus Christ the sacrificial Victim if you are to persevere in giving yourself entirely as priests.

Today's Gospel calls each of us to "love one another" as Christ loves us. If you are to fulfill this profound invitation you must come to know Christ's love intimately. St. Peter reminds us in the first reading that it is Jesus Christ who commissions us to preach. We must know Him if we are to fulfill this commission with conviction. You will come to know Him through prayer. The best place for this prayer is before the Eucharistic Lord Himself.

You have wonderful personal gifts. Share them generously, but remember: Your vocation is to the priesthood. The Church ordains you as priests! Therefore, **be priests!** Be willing to be priests who stand in the person of Jesus Christ. Allow yourself to be recognized as priests: not for the sake of privilege or honor, but as a sign of your ready service to God's people. Be spiritual fathers and guides, be directors of souls. Let your priesthood be your joy.

Devote yourself also to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Love Confession: both as a necessity in your own life and as the expression of your priestly ministry second only to the Holy Eucharist. The epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that the priest deals patiently with erring sinners, not because we are without sin, but because we also are beset by weakness. (Hb 5:2) Make it clear to the faithful that this sacrament is a vital part of your life. Take the initiative in being available to them and they will come to you – drawn by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Your priesthood will be aided by the gift of priestly celibacy by which you are free to give yourself completely to the Church with an undivided heart. In this way it will be clear that you belong entirely to Jesus Christ and your love for others will be at the same time deeply personal and all-embracing. Renew your profession of perpetual continence each day and you will be a source of strength to us all. By your example you will inspire others to live a love for others which is pure and holy.

In your priestly apostolate, allow God to make you an instrument of justice and peace. Promote

the dignity and respect for all human life from its inception until natural death. Support with zeal those persons who have no voice of their own: the unborn, those with special needs, the aged and the dying. Defend the integrity of marriage and the family which, as the Church teaches, are at the core of our society. Be in solidarity with those who suffer injustices in our society, those who are the target of prejudice, the poor, the migrant and refugee. Be for them the sign of God's love and mercy.

Be close to Mary, to whom our Lord entrusted us all, but in a special way, because she is the Mother of the High Priest, she is the mother of all priests. When your pastoral duties weigh upon you, ask St. Joseph , guardian of the Redeemer, Patron of the universal Church and our diocesan patron, to help you carry the load without becoming discouraged.

[Finally, dear sons, exercising for your part the office of Christ, Head and Shepherd, while united with the Bishop and subject to him, strive to bring the faithful into one family, so that you may lead them to God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Keep always before your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and who came to seek out and save what was lost.]

Note:

*The parts of the homily in brackets are taken from "Ordination of Priests," in **Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons, Second Typical Edition**, revised at the direction of Pope John Paul II, Washington , D.C. : United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004, pp. 74-76 (n. 123)*