

Consecration of Bishop Raimo, Helsinki 25.11.2023

Our human heart is always longing for something, or rather for Someone. We were created in the image of God. Our heart was created in order to be loved by God and in order to respond to this love with all our might. Unfortunately, however, many have forgotten this fundamental fact of our existence or never heard about it. Still, our heart is longing for love, for truth, for peace and justice. Especially in times of war and violence, of conflict and corruption. “Let light shine out of darkness” (2 Corinth 4:6), must be our prayer, over and over again. As Christians, we have to live in hope and confidence, even in difficult times. Jesus has taught us to have confidence in his and our merciful Father. He wants us all to be his messengers who proclaim the kingdom of God, the kingdom of peace and love, the kingdom of truth and mercy, the kingdom of solidarity and unity. In Jesus, we see that this kingdom has come to us.” Let light shine out of darkness”, Saint Paul tells us, the light “that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory of the face of Christ” (2 Corinth 4:6).

Our heart is longing to see the glory of the face of Christ, especially in these times of darkness. More than ever, we need to hope. We need to become a people of hope, a people of faith, a people of charity in order to proclaim the gospel to those who have forgotten it or never heard about it. Our Church is a Church of hope. Today it is especially a day of hope for the Catholic Church of Finland. The faithful have been longing for four long years to have a shepherd who can help them to live their vocation and guide them on the path of hope, charity, and faith. And here he is! During these years, I have met several Finnish Catholics who told me about their longing for a Bishop. Sometimes they showed some frustration or impatience, but they kept praying and praying. I was tempted to use the Swedish saying “*den som väntar på något gott väntar aldrig för länge* – he who longs for something good never longs too much”, but I did not want to seem cynical. Anyway, seldom have so many people been praying so intensely for a Bishop as here in Finland during these years.

Why is it so important to have a Bishop, people from outside would ask. The Church seems to keep going quite well without a Bishop. Holy Mass is celebrated, confessions, baptisms and marriages take place as usual. Still, something is missing. Someone is missing. The holy people of God need a shepherd, a father, a teacher, in order to help them on the pathway to holiness. They need a guide in difficult times in order to really be a people of hope, faith, and charity. Jesus has founded his Church on Peter and the other apostles. The successors of the apostles are needed in order to keep the apostolic faith and

tradition alive in the circumstances of today. The Catholic Church is a hierarchical community, but also a Church of synodality as we have been reminded quite recently. We have to listen to all the faithful and see that the Holy Spirit is alive in all the members of the mystical Body and that he is speaking through them. The Bishop has the task of discerning how the Holy Spirit is at work in laypeople and helping them to live their vocation to holiness. Bishop Raimo as a member of *Opus Dei* is very well prepared for this particular task of helping the entire people of God to fulfil their mission in the midst of society.

Every baptized person is entrusted with the wonderful mission of spreading the Gospel and “letting light shine out of darkness” (2 Corinth 4:6). We all need to be reminded of this task, over and over again. The Bishop has the obligation of reminding all the people of God, that each and every person has this vocation to be a messenger of hope, faith, and charity wherever he or she lives, in whatever situation he or she might live. It is a universal, global, and really Catholic vocation. Jesus sends us all out on this mission. Without mission there is no Church.

This is also a very ecumenical task and vocation. Together with all the other Christians, we as Catholics are called upon to be a more missionary community, especially in our secular countries. In our Nordic countries, thank God, there is a very good ecumenical atmosphere. Together we can work for evangelization of our societies. This ecumenical friendship is especially evident in Finland. We are most grateful to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland that has granted us the possibility of celebrating this Liturgy in this wonderful church. In Sweden, we sometimes feel a secret holy envy – if something like that is allowed or even possible – at the fact that a joint ecumenical delegation from Finland is received every year by the Holy Father in Rome. Anyway, we can be inspired by the good ecumenical relationships here in Finland. We know that your new Bishop has been very active in promoting Christian unity – and will continue to do so.

When God became man in Jesus Christ, he came to serve, not to be served. He came to give his life for our salvation (cf. Matthew 20:19). The biblical texts chosen for this liturgy show us an important aspect of what it means to be a Bishop. More than anything else the Bishop is a servant. The pope’s most beautiful and demanding title is to be *servus servorum Dei* - servant of the servants of God. “It is not ourselves that we are proclaiming, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinth 4:5). Jesus came to our world to be our servant, servant of our salvation. Your new Bishop,

dear brothers and sisters, came to you in the Diocese to be your servant, servant of your salvation and sanctification. Receive him as your true servant. Listen to him – and he will listen to you. Trust him. Love him. And do not forget to obey him – when needed! He is here for your sake. He will help you and guide you. He will remind you of your sacred vocation to be a holy people proclaiming the good news, being the witnesses of Jesus and letting light shine out of darkness.

Already the Prophet Isaiah has something wonderful to tell a new Bishop who quite soon will be anointed by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will send you to bring the good news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken-hearted, to transmit the oil of gladness for despondency (cf. Isaiah 6:1-3). In my opinion, this oil of gladness is especially needed in our Nordic countries in these times of ours. There is often an air of despondency – or even a kind of collective depression and a dark night of the soul – which can make life seem ever so dreary and dull, hopeless and meaningless. Dear Bishop Raimo, it is my prayer for you who come from the same sunny country as Saint John of the Cross, that you may transmit his message that even the dark night of the soul can help us here in our Nordic countries to long even more to get a little glimpse of the Risen Lord and his light. We really need this oil of gladness. We long for the message of the Resurrection. We need “the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory of the face of Christ” (2 Corinth 4:6).

As Christians, we are all supposed to bring the Gospel, the good news to those around us. We have received this immense gift in our baptism. But we need a teacher, a guide in order to help us to live this mystery in our everyday life. May he help us to become a people longing to come closer to Jesus. We need a Bishop to remind us, to help us to keep faith, hope, and charity alive in our hearts. Once again – and finally - this remains our prayer for each other, for our new Bishop, and for the entire world: “Let light shine out of darkness”. [Kiitos Jumalalle.] Amen.