

INSTITUTION OF ACOLYTES

I BELIEVE NOTHING CAN HAPPEN THAT WILL OUTWEIGH THE SUPREME ADVANTAGE OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS MY LORD. As we hear that wonderful 2ndR from St. Paul, first, I thank you for inviting me today, to celebrate this Mass, to return to this dear college where I spent 12 years on the staff, and to confer the ministry of acolyte on these four good men. We offer Mass at the start of a new era for the Church with a new pope. His choice of name recalls St. Francis of Assisi, a man filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, who embraced simplicity and evangelical poverty, and who inspires us today to live a simpler life-style in order to be united with Jesus. The name Francis also reminds us of the great Jesuit missionary to the Far East, Francis Xavier, who stirs you and I, living in the secular cultures of 21C, to the task of new evangelisation, an evangelisation that is new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression. So as we pray for Pope Francis, inaugurated on Tuesday, let us also ask the Lord Jesus to bless the whole Church at this time, to reassure us of his presence and his love.

I LOOK ON EVERYTHING AS SO MUCH RUBBISH IF ONLY I CAN HAVE CHRIST AND BE GIVEN A PLACE WITH HIM. St. Paul teaches us the absolute centrality of Jesus Christ and the call to a personal-passionate relationship with him as a disciple. To be united with Jesus, and thus to find lasting human happiness, requires us to change, even to suffer. It's fitting the new papacy begins in Lent Week 5, Passiontide. Recently in a radio interview, I was asked whether I thought Pope Francis would solve the crisis in the Church. I said: NO, HE WON'T; HE CAN'T. The Church has been in crisis ever since it began in that boat, on the choppy waters of the Sea of Galilee, with Christ. It's always in crisis because it is made up of sinners, of ordinary people like you and me, and it will only be at rest when fully converted and holy we are united with Jesus forever in Paradise. This is why as St. Paul says, we have to run a race TO CAPTURE THE PRIZE FOR WHICH CHRIST JESUS CAPTURED us. We must convert; we must become holy; we must embrace evangelical simplicity; we must stay close to him.

To be priests today, we need to embrace the Cross through the grace of the Resurrection. We need to be ready to suffer, to be thick-skinned, to be canny, to

transcend our comfort zones. As the Church heads out into the deep waters of 21C and 22C, a new evangelistic Catholicism is emerging, smaller, more humble, yet focused on the core message: the love of Christ, died and risen, and discipleship within his Body the Church. This is why today we rejoice for our new acolytes and pray for you as you embrace the Cross through the resurrection. When I became bishop last autumn, I asked people to pray I'd be humble and holy, orthodox, creative and courageous. Most of the Catholic press had selective hearing; they picked up just one of those qualities. Yet all five are needed if we are to serve Christ today. It is our prayer for you acolytes: that just as Jesus lays down his life in the Holy Eucharist you administer to the poor, you too will become like him, and be humble and holy, orthodox, creative and courageous ministers of the Gospel.

ALL I WANT IS TO KNOW CHRIST & THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION. In this Mass, as the Church begins a new era, with a new pope and our new acolytes, let us turn to the Heart of Jesus, obedient unto death. Indeed, as we navigate the stormy waters, let us ask him to reassure us 'I AM WITH YOU' and to give us the grace through the resurrection to persevere in embracing the Cross until we reach our home in heaven.