

**Homily for the Priestly Ordination of our brothers
Wilson Colmenares and Briggs Hurley
Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine
June 17, 2017**

The local Church of St. Augustine celebrates the reception of the sacrament of Holy Orders by two very talented men: our brothers, Deacons Briggs and Wilson. How fitting it is for you, Deacon Briggs, to be ordained in the Cathedral of St. Augustine since it is here that your discernment led you to enter the seminary while a student at Flagler College. Deacon Wilson, it is also quite appropriate that you will become a priest for the Mother Diocese of St. Augustine where the first evangelization of our country began, in Spanish, under the protection of Nuestra Señora de la Leche y del Buen Parto.

1. Let us celebrate the fact that in choosing to become priests you first consented to become men of God. Before you were humanly conceived, God already had your faces in his mind, God had elected you for a good purpose, as prophet Jeremiah said: “to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1, 10).

Today, perhaps you experience fear or trust, perplexity or amazement, doubts or certainties about your decision, but the Lord Jesus assures you that you did not choose Him; He chose you. (John 15:16)

Why has God chosen Deacons Briggs and Wilson? You would probably respond that there is so much work to do and the real laborers are rather few.

I prefer to think that He called them to draw them to his Heart, as we remember what St. Mark says about the call of the first disciples: “He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him.” (Mk. 3: 13) Jesus the Christ freely called you to be with him, to be his companions, his friends rather than his servants. In the words of Pope Francis in his pastoral visit last month to Genoa, Italy, Jesus chose you to walk with him immersed in the river of life where people are, in their ordinary living, in their concrete neighborhood.

It is true that the bishop, with his priests, consecrate you by the laying on of hands but all of us know well that ultimately it is the triune, Eternal God who consecrates you. It is the Holy Spirit who consecrates you. Your yes is a faithful, trusting yes to the Lord from the deepest recesses of your loving heart.

And in your surrender, you are not alone. Mary in her fiat at the Annunciation guards your consent to God’s call. As St. Augustine said so well, her consent in faith as a disciple of Christ is even more important than her motherhood. (St. Augustine Sermon 72, A, 7)

2. Let us celebrate the fact that today, this is the day the Lord has made for you, Deacons Briggs and Wilson! ...in this holy Mass, you become today servants of the Eucharist, you are our joy because you are the two new ministers of the always amazing sacrament of the new covenant. It is such a striking coincidence that Jesus, our Beloved, in loving us to the extreme (Jo 13, 1) in the sacramental gift of his body and blood, he also instituted the

priesthood (do this in memory of Me). Remember always St. Augustine's quotation about the Eucharist, "Receive what you are and become what you receive." At the same time, the Eucharist is an active force in your becoming a joyful priest: "Behold I make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

The renewal of your priestly life happens in the altar of your daily Mass. There is nothing less neutral than the Eucharistic Mystery. It is the superabundant source of all pastoral care. The Eucharist reminds us that everything flows from the Father's gracious initiative and action. Everything is grace. In this way, you become true builders of communion and mission.

May the Lord fully "take" you, seizing your hearts, minds, memories, and imaginations. May he "bless" you with his courage and insight. May he "break" your hearts open in chaste, self-giving love. May he "give" you to us all, pouring us out as a libation for the good of all people, especially the vulnerable, the weak, the stranger, the forgotten, the discarded ones.

Fathers-elect Briggs and Wilson, help the Diocese of St. Augustin embrace Pope Francis' image of pastoral care of the parish as a field hospital for sinners, living in solidarity with the wounds of others, allowing to be inconvenienced by the misfortunes of others for they are the flesh of Christ in need of tenderness and mercy. Let your ambition focus in being present in the peripheries rather than in acquiring titles, positions, ranks, honors or privileges. Let your ambition be the way of holiness of life truly pursued for real!

3. Let us celebrate that like St. Paul Apostle; you become ministers of reconciliation and peace. Many teens of our Catholic schools in our diocese rejoice in receiving the Bishop John J. Snyder Award, the Peace in Christ Award, which is also Bishop Snyder's episcopal motto.

During his years as Ordinary, he cared so much for those incarcerated and disabled and continues to visit the prisons and death row, a model of peacemaker. In the confessional, you will be instruments of peace in imparting the mercy of the Good Shepherd to thousands and thousands of souls during your lifetime.

Pope Francis by his example and teaching is an ardent promoter of the sacrament of reconciliation which the Church entrusts to the ministry of priests and bishops. To participants of a course on this sacrament, he said: "Let's not forget that the faithful often struggles to take part in the sacrament, both for practical reasons and because of the natural difficulty in confessing one's sins to another person...For that reason, we have to work really hard on who we are, on our humanity, so as to never be an obstacle, but to always help people be drawn to mercy and forgiveness.

Good confessors must welcome penitents, not with the attitude of a judge and not like a simple friend, but with the charity of God. The love of a father who sees his son returning and then heads his way, like the shepherd who has found his lost sheep, mercy is the heart of the Gospel. It's the good news that God loves us, that he always loves sinful humanity and, with this love, he attracts people to him and invites them to conversion. Mercy truly listens with the heart of God and wants to accompany the soul along the road of reconciliation.

Confession is not a prosecuting court but an experience of forgiveness and mercy.
Confession is an immense gift the Lord gave his Church. (Taken from Catholic Herald.co.uk.
March 28, 2014)

De Venezuela, de la Republica del Santisimo Sacramento nos viene Wilson este tan talentoso y humilde abogado de una bella familia, hombre del Espiritu, de este rico pais hoy sufriente por conflictos sociales pero con una gran tradicion democratica. La presencia del neo sacerdote Wilson es un signo mas para nosotros que la inmigracion es buena y positiva para nuestro pais llamado por el Presidente Catolico John F Kennedy, pais de inmigrantes, y nosotros en el Noreste de la Florida somos agraciados por su don y su entrega y le damos gracias a su linda familia por su apoyo hacia Wilson en su perseverante entrega y sacrificio de tantos anos que culminan hoy en este dia tan feliz en que el llega a ser sacramento de Cristo, el Buen Pastor.

I entrust your priesthood dear brothers in the Lord to Our Lady of La Leche, our Lady, the Mother of the Lord, called with this historic name from the beginning of the evangelization here in St. Augustine. Let me conclude as I pray with you and for you the prayer to Our Lady, written by Father Al Esposito as a conclusion for the recent pastoral letter on stewardship:

Dear Mother Mary, our Lady of La Leche, with great hope and confidence we entrust our work Eucharistic Stewardship to you. We acknowledge our littleness and, in communion with you, we magnify the Glory of the Lord. The Spirit touched the barren womb of your cousin, Elizabeth, and your virginal womb.

From seeming emptiness, the voice crying in the wilderness and the Lamb of God came forth, proclaiming a year acceptable to the Lord, in which sight is given to the blind, hearing to the deaf, dancing to the lame, and freedom to prisoners. From seeming barrenness, we have been given a new family, the Church, a place of relationship, identity, and mission.

Our Lady, we celebrate the freedom and joy your "Yes" gives to us. Accompanied by your spouse, the Holy Spirit, touch our barrenness, so that we may give birth to new life in the Diocese of St. Augustine.

With you as mother and guide, we are indeed One Faith, One Family. Help us make our parish life a culture of encounter with your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to accompany one another in the light of your maternal gaze. Help us to evangelize through the beauty of Trinitarian fecundity. Help us to provide healing for those who are broken and vulnerable. Help us to be a family where all people may find a place of warmth, welcome, and belonging.

Mother of the Word Incarnate, give us the courage and insight to promote tenderness in all we do. We go into mission, not with the arms of war, but with the gifts of the Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. Knowing that your presence and intercession envelop us with tender love, we walk together in the reality of contagious hope the road to peace.