

Institution of Acolytes – October 1, 2023

It is a great joy to preside over this mass today, where these 6 men will be instituted as acolytes. Thank you for saying yes to this very important ministry for the church. You may have seen them serving at the altar already. The role of the acolyte is to assist the bishop, priests, and deacons at the Eucharistic celebrations. It is very important to notice that although commonly, we use the term acolytes to all altar servers, as duly instituted acolytes, you will also be called to distribute the Body and Blood of Christ to the faithful. In addition, in the absence of a priest or a deacon, you may be entrusted to expose the Blessed Sacrament for the adoration of the faithful, however, not with benediction. My dear acolytes' candidates, you have received a call to serve at the Eucharist Table and have said yes to this call. Are you fully aware of the responsibility of being ministers of the Eucharist? Today's reading help us to understand the meaning of saying yes to Christ.

In today's Gospel passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the two sons. A father asks both of his sons to work in his vineyard. The first son initially refuses but later changes his mind and goes to work. The second son, on the other hand, agrees to go but does not follow through. This parable holds a powerful lesson for each one of us today. It reminds us that actions must back our words. We can say all the right things, but if our actions do not align with our words, they become empty and meaningless. Just as the two sons were given the responsibility to work in the vineyard, God

has given us unique talents, abilities, and blessings. We are stewards of His gifts, called to use them for the greater good and the building of His kingdom. Often in our lives, we find ourselves making promises to God and to others. We say that we will pray more, that we will make time for our families, and that we will be more patient and loving. But how often do we actually follow through on these commitments? How often do we allow the distractions of this world to get in the way?

The first son in the parable represents those of us who may initially resist God's call or find it challenging to obey His commandments. We may have our own doubts, fears, or even pride that prevent us from fully embracing the will of our Heavenly Father. But what ultimately matters is our willingness to change, to repent, and to work towards aligning our actions with God's will. This change of heart symbolizes true repentance—the realization of our wrongdoing and our decision to turn back to God. It reminds us that it is never too late to return to the path of righteousness and to seek forgiveness. God is always ready to welcome us with open arms.

The second son in the parable represents those who may appear outwardly devout and religious but lack sincerity of heart. They may engage in empty rituals and religious observances without truly having a genuine relationship with God. Their words may be pleasing to the ear, but their hearts remain unchanged.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, are we like the first son, initially resistant but ultimately willing to change? Or does our behavior resemble the second son, quick to make promises but slow to follow through? Let us remember that true conversion of the heart requires action. It requires forgiving those who have hurt us and seeking reconciliation. It requires opening our hearts to the poor and the marginalized and serving them with love and compassion. It requires making time for prayer, reading, and meditating on God's Word and fostering a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

As we gather here today, let us renew our commitment to be doers of the Word, not just hearers. Let our actions truly reflect our love for God and our desire to obey His will. Let us be like the first son who, despite initial resistance, ultimately chose to follow his father's will.

My dear acolytes' candidates, you have said yes to the Lord. You are called to serve at the altar with deeper faith in the Lord Jesus. Grow your life of prayer. To be filled with a great love for God's holy people, especially the poor, the sick, and the vulnerable. Bring to them not only your love and concern. But the greatest gift of all, Jesus' love in the Eucharist.

And to all of us here, let us ask for the intercession of our mother, our Lady of Guadalupe, to help us to be more like the first son of the parable. That we can recognize our faults, repent, and return to work in the vineyard of the Lord.