

Saint Anthony R.C. Church (Prospect, CT)

25th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination of Rev. Grzegorz Jaworowski

05-05-2019

The words to St. John Paul II's favorite song are as follows: „Lord, when you came to the seashore you weren't seeking the wise or the wealthy, but only asking that I might follow.” These words were guidance and companionship for the pope for his entire pontificate. He often sang the song with the youth during World Youth Days. We sing the words today celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of priesthood of the pastor of this parish – Fr. Gregory Jaworowski.

The gospel takes our imaginations and thoughts to the Sea of Tiberias, where Jesus appears to His disciples for the third time after His resurrection. From afar Simon

Peter and the others did not recognize Him. This part of the Gospel tells us about a “Peter moment” or moment of recognition, when Jesus asks them if they have something to eat, and when the disciples finally recognize the Risen Christ for who He is, and decide to follow Him becoming fishers of men. Jesus asks Peter “Do you love me?” Three times Peter responds: “Lord you know I love you”, although just a few days before with his life in danger this was not so apparent. This is an incredibly important encounter because we should each envision ourselves in this exchange. No matter how intensely we may feel we love the Lord, we are always subject to the same moments of weakness and failure. It is important that we remember that the love of God is greater than our ability to deserve it or live up to it. This is a challenge that we all face. We ask what is important to us. Do we like Jesus, or do we love Him? There is a

critical difference. The fishing imagery is transformed into something much greater – a call to caring and shepherding ministry.

A great example of someone who responded clearly to the calling that he received from the Lord was St. John Paul II. When John Paul II was canonized, just over five years ago, the Church showed the beauty of his humanity in the response – “Lord You know everything, you know I love You.” The late pope’s life is a testament to God’s presence and His action in our lives. Karol Wojtyla’s being, tells us all that saints are people just like us – made of blood and bone – and heaven is not so far from us. We can achieve it through a series of actions that we carry on through our time on earth. John Paul II recognized and acted on this code. He repeated “Do not be afraid – Open the doors to Christ and His reign.”

Wojtyla was not afraid to enter the seminary, even though he needed to forget about becoming an actor and poet as he planned earlier in his life. He was not afraid to leave his native land – like Abraham – when he was chosen as the pontiff in 1978. Chosen as the pope – he accepted the decision of conclave in spirit of faith and obedience to the Lord. In the Vatican he broke many social norms, in an effort to be close with the people he served – to more intimately know the Church globally. John Paul II received many letters from all over the world asking for prayers. Upon receiving letters, he would pray for each and every one, with a map or atlas in hand in his chapel, to know exactly where these letters were coming from. The pope knew that through his Church, Christ entrusted him with the fundamental mission of sharing with others the gift of salvation. John Paul II saw no limitations, he wanted to reach out to all the extents of

the world – sharing the love of Jesus with everyone he met, regardless of their religious affiliation or national background. He remained faithful until he returned to the Home of Our Father.”

On the fifth anniversary of his canonization we will bless the statue here in the parish as a reminder of a saint of our times, teaching us to fulfill our calling.

Dear brother priests, brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of Fr. Grzegorz Jaworowski. Every priestly day is a reason for thanks, as well as every celebrated Eucharist, a gift above all gifts. Every jubilee is also a time to reflect and improve on what has occurred in our lives, whether or not we found our true selves, and that everything in a priest’s life is wonderful, good, noble and beautiful despite the fact

that he decided to fully follow the will of the Highest Priest – Jesus Christ.

His calling was born during the time of John Paul II's pontificate. He answered to God's call, entering the seminary in Lomza in 1988. After a short ministry in Poland, he moved to Paris, where he would serve and minister to the faithful in multiple parishes. He continued his pastoral studies in Paris to better serve the people there. He approached all things with enthusiasm and vigor, looking into the future with zeal. After moving to the United States, he served the people of the Archdiocese of Hartford and does so to this day.

Fr. Gregorz, the mission lands in which you have been called to work are not necessarily located in distant

countries, but can be found throughout the world even in the everyday situations where you are. Being disciples of Christ, as you have shown through your ministry, is not a private matter. On the contrary, the gift of faith must be shared with others. Do not forget that faith is strengthened and grows precisely when it is given to others. Proclaiming Christ means, above all, giving witness to him with one's life. It is the simplest form of preaching the Gospel and, at the same time, the most effective way available to you. It consists in showing of the visible presence of Christ in one's own life by a daily commitment and by making every concrete decision in conformity with the Gospel. Today the world especially needs believable witnesses. Therefore, testify to your faith, as you have done through twenty-five years of your ministry, through your involvement in the world. A disciple of Christ is never a passive and an indifferent

observer of what is taking place. On the contrary, he feels responsible for transforming social, political, economic and cultural reality.

Fr. Grzegorz, I wish you the continued courage to speak about Christ in your parish and community, inspired with the same fervor the Apostles had. Do not be afraid of presenting Christ to someone who does not yet know Him. Christ is the true answer, the most complete answer to all the questions which concern the human person and his destiny. Without Christ the human person remains an unsolvable riddle.

Despite this, you have found your calling and filled it to this day. For the gift of your priesthood we thank you, Fr. Grzegorz. Those who pray, and speak with God attain joys and are truly happy. A priest spends so much time

with the Eucharistic Christ, and becomes his friend. He can bring Him to the altar, bring him out for adoration, feed hungry hearts and souls with Him and visit Him in times of loneliness. Your heart, Fr. Grzegorz, will always be the same. The tones will not change and you will always desire to be a friend and servant of Christ. May your heart always stay young, and so it does not tire because of the love we are called to by Christ. May this vigor remain in your life without end.

Amen.