

Congratulations Fr. Matt on your ordination to the priesthood! I extend my heartfelt congratulations to your parents, Mark and Annette, because they raised you and prepared you for the day when would say "yes" to your vocation from God.

Today's Solemnity of the Holy Trinity can feel a bit obscure in that the language and concepts of the Trinity are so difficult to understand: Three Persons, one divine nature. We wonder, "Why does this matter? Why does understanding the Trinity affect my life?" It's a great question. And for you Fr. Matt, we wonder how knowledge of the Trinity shapes your priesthood?

Sacred Scripture reveals that God is love. Each Person of the Trinity exists entirely for the other. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to Him (Jn 3:35).

The **Son**, for his part, receives the Father's love and gives Himself entirely back to Him. He lives "for" the Father, with the Father, and in the Father. Hence, Jesus says, "*I do nothing on my own, but I only say what the Father taught me*" (Jn. 8:28).

The **Holy Spirit** exists for the Father and the Son. He is the Love shared or breathed back and forth between the Father and the Son.

In short, each Person is a gift for the others. If we are made in the image and likeness of God, the Trinity, this means that we are created not to live for ourselves, but "for" others, i.e., to make a gift of ourselves to others.

In the spiritual life, this sometimes called the "**law of the gift**," which means that your life, your happiness and joy, increases to the extent that you give yourself away (2x). The more you make a gift of yourself, the happier and more fulfilled you will be! Hence, Jesus says, "*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*" (Mt. 16:25) **Simply put:** The Trinity is a blueprint for how to live our lives, i.e., your life is not about you. It is about living for others.

This has implications for everyone, but in particular, it has implications for you, Fr. Matt, as you celebrate your first Mass or your Mass of Thanksgiving and begin your life as a priest.

You have been ordained for 24 hours – one whole day. We can still smell the oil on your hands. God calls you, as a priest, to live this **law of the gift**. Give yourself freely and joyfully to the sheep that God entrusts to your care.

Pope Francis said beautifully to priests: "This is what I am asking you, be shepherds with the smell of the sheep." Fr. Matt, smell like the sheep entrusted to your care. Be interested in their lives. Spend time with them. Serve them with great joy. Don't count the cost.

In doing so, you will reveal and make present God's love, Trinitarian love, the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to those whom you serve! To do this, Jesus invites you to be with and serve His sheep, "in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health." (Wedding vow)

In my short time as a priest, if there is one question God's people want to know, it's this: "Father, are you with us?" Do you care about us? Do you like spending time with us? Are we worth loving?" Fr. Matt, your life must answer again and again, "yes!" God is love and He loves you. God invites you to make His love present in all circumstances. Jesus wants to love His sheep through you – your personality, including your gifts and your weaknesses.

Fr. Matt, sometimes you will encounter really difficult situations: tears from strained marriages, broken marriages, worn down parents, lost teenagers, and lonely widows and widowers.

You will come face to face with suffering in pastoral situations and in the confessional on a regular basis. As they wipe their tears, they want to know, "Does the Lord love me? Where is He in this?" The gentleness of your voice, the warmth of your face, and the mercy in your eyes all communicate, "Absolutely. You are loved. The Lord is here. He is merciful, forgiving, and He is with you."

Along with sorrows, you will also have the privilege of sharing in so many joys of the faithful as well. For example, you will experience the joy of couples preparing for their marriage. They're in love and they want you to know it! "Father, *she's* terrific." Father, *he's* perfect!" "Give it some time. Give it some time. The Lord shares in your joy. I'm with you, but let's talk about Jesus and sacrificial love."

Additionally, very often the faithful will open their homes to you by inviting you over for dinner. As you step into their homes, you are entering into their little world – their sanctuary. Essentially, they want you to share in their joy. They want you to see how the Lord is present in their family and what He is doing.

Living entirely for Christ and loving as He loves is extremely difficult. However, the good news is that you don't have to do it alone. Along with God's grace, you always have the support of your family.

At the end of the Mass, you will give your father a stole that you will use in your first confession. And you will give your mom the cloth used to wipe the oil from your hands at your ordination. Your parents have been so supportive, and will continue to be there for you.

And of course, our parish will always pray for you and support you as well. While the Lord is sending you to other parishes, with the first stop at St. Stephen's in Anoka, where everyone is good looking and above average, know that you always have a home here at St. Therese.

Fr. Matt, thank you for your "yes" in giving your life to Christ as His priest! May you allow Jesus to love His sheep through you every day!

As you begin this great adventure in Christ, be generous with your life and in doing so, you will reveal and make present the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

May the good Lord and the humble Heart of His mother, Mary, be with you today and always. God bless you.