Episcopal Consecration of Bishop Jamal Daibes

Friday, May 6, 2022
Bethlehem

Most Reverend Excellencies
Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Dear Msgr. Jamal
May the Lord give you peace!
"Keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are... so that they may share my joy completely." (John 17:11.13).

This passage from Jesus' priestly prayer manifests a profound intimacy between Jesus and God the Father. This is the very intimacy that Jesus also desires his disciples to make their own. That same unity between Jesus and the Father, that same joy, must become the characteristic of his disciples.

Let this be the starting point of the episcopal ministry you are about to begin, dear Jamal. Both the Gospel chosen by Bishop Rafic and the one you have chosen, have as a central reference of the ministry, of "being in the world" according to the language of the Evangelist John, the necessary intimate relationship with the Lord. Before being sent one is chosen, wanted and loved by the Lord.

The word *episcopus* comes from the verb "to look from above". Not only in the sense of controlling and supervising, but also in the sense of knowing how to look at the life of this world from above, from a certain distance.

The Gospel you have chosen, in fact, tells us that the Pastor must not belong to this world, "*because they do not belong to the world*" (Jn. 17:14). This is not an invitation to ignore the reality of the life in which we are immersed. On the contrary, the Pastor is called to take on and orient all the political and social issues of his community, as well as the religious ones. A pastor who closes himself up in his sacristy and is not attentive to the civil life of his community is neglecting an inalienable duty. At the same time, however, he must lead the faithful to a broader view of civil life and teach them to look at the reality with a gaze that is free from human conditioning, from the logic of possession and power, which are always divisive. In other words, he is called to build the community precisely from that personal intimacy with the Word of which Jesus speaks in today's Gospel passage and which must also become a characteristic of the community. Without

this intimacy with the Word of God, the measure and criterion with which we confront reality will remain ourselves and the logic of the world.

The first reading you chose calls you to the same idea, "a prophet to the nations I appointed you" (Jer. 1:5). The prophet is part of the people to whom he belongs in everything, but at the same time he also belongs to God, because it is in the name of God that he speaks to his people. In a certain sense the prophet is as if suspended: he belongs to the people, but not totally, because he also belongs to God. But he does not even belong to God totally, because he also belongs to his people. Handed over to God and to the people, the prophet never belongs to everyone completely, and he is continually called upon to create unity within himself between these two instances: to be the spokesman for the life of his people to God, and to bring the voice of God to the people. This entails a loneliness that is sometimes painful and heavy, but necessary. It is constitutive of the ministry you are about to begin, which only intimacy with the Lord can fill. Only in this way can your ministry become fruitful with new life for the community.

So may it be for you, Jamal. Your life no longer belongs to you. You no longer live for yourself: make sure that the priests, the faithful, the world you will meet, see in you someone who helps them to look from above, to know how to see their own reality of life starting not only from their pain and their suffering, but with a gaze that includes the presence of God and the Church. Your voice, in fact, will be the voice of the Church and your face will be the face of the Church. May, therefore, the portion of the Church entrusted to you have the voice and face of a prophet, of one who, though fully part of the deepest fibers of society, nevertheless belongs to God and knows how to speak and act only in the name of God.

Like everyone else, you too are "*clothed in weakness*" (Heb. 5:2), and you will often experience a great sense of powerlessness. However, by trusting in the Lord, you will learn to hand over in prayer what you cannot do in your ministry. You will learn to look at obedience from another angle: not only as a request received from above and to be observed, but also as a good to be understood, as a participation in the common mission. The passage from the second reading, "*he learned obedience from what he suffered*" (Heb. 5:8), will acquire a new meaning for you. No longer will you only have to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people (cf. Heb. 5:1), but you yourself will become an offering, offering yourself daily in the Eucharistic sacrifice, for the life of your community.

Allow me now to remind you, as I did also for Bishop Rafic, of just a few of the priorities for your ministry in the pastoral region in which you are called to work. The indications that I gave in Nazareth also apply to Jordan. I would like to add the following to those already stated.

Jordan is a large country and a considerable part of the diocesan community is located in Jordan. The responsibility entrusted to you is therefore great. First, do not confuse Jordan with Amman. It is true that many initiatives and parishes are concentrated in the capital. Yet Jordan begins in Aqaba, in the south, and ends in Irbid, in the north. Do not forget, then, the farthest areas, which are equally important.

Proximity. The pastor must be close to the priests and the people. Being present is a pastor's duty. Sometimes we think that if there is no specific commitment, no specific ministerial task

(confirmation, blessing etc.) there is no need to make a visit. Often the opposite is true. In the absence of specific ministerial commitments, there is more time left for listening and sharing. Being there is important. A simple but attentive presence that knows how to listen and give direction is necessary. One of the greatest poverties of our time is solitude. Often in families, schools and workplaces, there is a need for someone to listen, to be a reference point. I have seen for myself how much someone is expected to listen to the needs and difficulties of people, and also of the priests. It is difficult, because most of the time you will have no solutions to offer, and you will feel inadequate. More than just talking and saying, the defining part of your ministry will be listening and being close.

Family. In Jordan there are many family associations, some even born spontaneously, and this is a wonderful sign of Christian commitment on the part of many in that country. It is truly a beautiful consolation. It will be increasingly urgent to form and support the family environment in a broader way, especially in large cities. It is in families that the future of our ecclesial community is at stake. Economic emergencies, the not always correct use of the media and cultural changes also have a great influence on our family world, and require our concrete presence. Among the many voices and requests that are heard, the voice of the Church should also be heard in families, as a voice that builds, unites, consoles and supports.

Formation and schools. There are many Christian schools in Jordan. They have a central role, important both in making visible the commitment of the Christian community within Jordanian society, and in the educational field, and in giving our young people a good Christian formation. As I said to Msgr. Rafic, I am not sure that this is exactly the case. But there is no doubt that it is necessary to have a clear perspective for Christian schools for the near future. It is true that we are born Christian here in our area, but we also know that this is not enough. The Christian school and the Church have the decisive task of making people become Christian, that is to say, of making our young people aware of what it really means to be Christian and to give birth in them to the desire for Christian witness.

Dear Jamal, today the Church celebrates your consecration. Not only Jordan, but the entire Diocese of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem rejoices and gathers around you.

May Mary of Nazareth, Virgin and Mother here in Bethlehem, protect you and guard your Episcopal ministry. From her, Woman of hospitality and humility, may you also learn readiness to serve your brothers and sisters. May Saint Joseph intercede for you and grant you the same love that he has for the Church of his son Jesus Christ. Amen

+Pierbattista Pizzaballa
Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem