

## ***Configured to Christ as Servant for All***

Homily for the Ordination of Lalo Barragan as Transitional Deacon for the Diocese of Yakima

*Isaiah 6:1-8; Acts 6:1-7; Matthew 20:20-28*

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, Bishop of Yakima

Peace be with you! "...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as ransom for the many..." Those words of Jesus captured in our Gospel from St. Matthew are the interpretive key for this deacon ordination of Lalo Barragan. "...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as ransom for the many..."

Let's start with that phrase "...for the many..." Who are the many that Christ gives his life as ransom? Well, look around the Church tonight. "The many..." are the many groups here tonight. There are folks here who've worked with Lalo when served as a manager at Evans fruit. There are folks who worked with Lalo at what's now called "Atrium" windows in Union Gap. Of course there are "...the many" that form Lalo Barragan's family ... and they are many!

I say this because in the new English translation of the Roman Missal we've moved from using the phrase "...for all..." to this precise phrase "...for many..." NOT because Jesus failed to come for all but precisely because he came for the MANY communities, groups and peoples searching for meaning, desiring a fuller life, and wanting to understand how God is present even in the midst of sorrow and death. And we pray "...for the many..." in hopes that many will be saved.

Our second reading from the Acts of the Apostles underscores this point. The stress in the early Christian community made up of both Greeks and Hebrews grew from the fact that the Hebrew part of the early Christian community looked better served than the Greeks. This gave rise to the practical solution of having deacons – and note those deacons all have Greek names – ordained to make sure there was a fair distribution of necessities in that early Christian community especially for the widows who were in economic need. The point here is that salvation depends – not only on our personal response to Christ – but on our response to Christ "...for the many..." who depend on us to show them the way to Christ and "...on the many..." who have led us to Christ teaching us how to say "yes" to Christ.

This is why we give our life not only "...for the many..." – but "...as a ransom..." So often when we hear the word ransom we think about the payment of money for those who've been kidnapped. But "ransom" in this passage refers to something much more physical and concrete. It means – literally – placing ourselves into the other group, moving among "...the many..." and immersing ourselves into the "...other side..."

This is precisely the path Lalo Barragan has taken in his journey from packing warehouse manager to deacon. Indeed, several months after becoming bishop of Yakima, Lalo asked me whether he could take a little more time for studies – since he'd already served many years as a youth minister in Cowiche. His idea was to skip the pastoral internship and take more classes. I told him – and this is “the ransom” part of Jesus’ words – that I wanted him to not only do the pastoral placement but to do it in an all-English environment. I wanted him to experience the stress points in English language culture and to sharpen his pastoral skills in an English language environment where the faith may be less robust and sometimes more challenged by skepticism and doubt. Why? That’s how we give ourselves as ransom!

Similarly it is why I insist that all of our seminarians spend time working in the fields picking fruit and in the warehouses packing apples. We give ourselves “...as a ransom for the many...” precisely because so that we can infuse the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the working lives of those we’re called to serve.

Were we not to do this, how could we possibly bring up the bread and the wine – fruit of the earth and work of human hands – with any kind of honesty or integrity were we not to have shared in the real labors of those in the field?

Lalo your willingness to give your life as “...a ransom for the many...” is precisely what allows your family, your friends, your former co-workers, your parishioners in Cowiche as well as the many places you’ve served as a seminarian to bring you forth today. They bring you – along with the bread and wine – to be offered as a ransom. You are the work of their hands! They shaped you! Formed you! Taught you working habits! Given you insight into their sorrow and joy! Opened their hearts to you! Showed you a path by which you can serve them.

It is their labors that you place on the altar with the bread and wine and it is their salvation that you offer yourself “...as a ransom for the many...” You do so precisely because of your love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and your desire to be configured into him for those you serve.

For it is Christ we serve in the faces of our co-workers at the bodegas. It is Christ we serve in the fields and orchards. It is Christ we serve in the offices and bureaus. It is Christ we serve in our Catholic schools in our Catholic Charities. It is Christ we serve no matter our line of work, our skill or our labor.

Lalo you used to prepare the tables by packing fruit. Now you serve at the Table of the Lord for a community – not so much made up of Greeks and Hebrews – but communities shaped by Spanish and English. It is with great hope and confidence that I will ordain you a deacon knowing the desire you have in your heart to assimilate these diaconal words of Jesus: “...the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as ransom for the many...” Peace be with you!