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## **THE JOYS OF A BISHOP**

*Homily for the Episcopal Ordination*

*Of Bishop Gary Studniewski and Bishop Robert Boxie*

*As Auxiliary Bishops of Washington, July 7, 2026*

**In today's Gospel, Jesus encapsulates the entirety of the call of discipleship in two sentences: As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.**

**Gary and Robert, you stand here today precisely because you have known the love of God deeply in your hearts for the whole of your life, and you have radiated that love in your priestly ministry. You have experienced the love of God profoundly through the grace of your parents and families. You heard the loving call of God to the priesthood amidst careers in which you were deeply embedded and which promised great things. Each**



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**of you had particular pathways of prayer and support that brought you closer to the Lord – Bishop Gary through Cursillo and Bishop Boxie through your continuing links with the faith community of Lake Charles.**

**The footprints of grace that you have left during your priestly ministries are deep and enduring: in the parishes where you have been shepherds and servants, in unstinting service to the men and women who defend our nation; in the vibrant Catholic community of Howard University that you have renewed. It is these footprints of grace that have led our Holy Father, Pope Leo, to call you to the episcopate, and to a new pathway for your earthly pilgrimage on this life ahead. All of us gathered here today testify to the wisdom of that decision and will stand in**



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**continuing solidarity with you as you undertake this vital mission of leadership, sacrifice and profound faith.**

**In the passage from the Gospel that you chose for today, Jesus tells the apostles: “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.” Now at this historical moment when the burdens of being a bishop seem on many levels to be magnified, it may be hard to comprehend how the episcopate can be a pathway to joy. But it is. And as you begin your lives as bishops, Robert and Gary, I want to reflect upon seven central joys in the life of a bishop that I pray will be constantly interwoven in your new ministry and will in turn bring grace to all those whom you encounter.**

**The most foundational joy for a bishop lies in the prayers that are offered for him by literally thousands of women and men**



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**throughout the diocese. This sacred canopy of spiritual support is a reminder that a bishop never walks alone, but is conjoined to Jesus Christ and raised up in prayer by countless disciples of profound faith. It is deeply humbling to encounter people whom you have never met, but upon first meeting say that you have been a part of their life of prayer regularly. It is humbling, touching, and consoling, and it conveys the face and presence of Jesus Christ with awe and wonder. In moments of hardship and struggle, this reality will sustain you. And in moments of exhilaration, they will remind you that everything you undertake finds its meaning in the unity of the Pilgrim People of God walking together toward the Kingdom.**

**A second joy that you will encounter in your new life as a bishop will be to experience on a deeper and broader level the sacred**



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**beauty and wonder of our diocesan presbyterate endeavoring to live out the call of Christ to priestly life and service. You will witness the tender pastoral love and the immense talents that characterize our priests. You will come to understand the sacrifices they have made, the creativity and energy they show in bringing hope to their people, and their commitment to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are the center of their lives. Even in failures, you will often see heroic stories of repentance and renewal in service to the Lord. As a bishop, you will be edified by our priests and their lives, and find great joy in being one with them in the priestly identity that binds us irrevocably together in Jesus Christ.**

**Another joy in the life of a bishop is the unique call to witness to the catholicity of the Church that is a key element of the**



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**apostolic mission. Bishop Studniewski and Bishop Boxie, in your priesthood you have experienced the call to bond intimately with specific communities of faith in this Archdiocese. This has been a profound grace for each of you. Now, as a bishop, the scope of your mission will expand, as you are called to serve the entire People of God in this local church in all of its diversity and splendor. Just as importantly, you are called to witness to the universal reality of the Church and our union with the successor of Peter. This new dimension of your service to Jesus Christ will bring you into contact with Catholic communities throughout the world, and will inflame your hearts with the magnificence of the universal call to holiness as it is lived in every culture and land.**

**As successors of the apostles, you will participate in the collegial ministry that unites every bishop in co-responsibility**



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**for the leadership of the Church in union with Pope Leo. And you will experience beautiful dimensions of that catholicity which is both a mark of the Church and a call for rejoicing as disciples of Jesus Christ.**

**A bishop is called to unique leadership and authority within the local church. This hierarchical dimension of our ecclesial theology and practice descends from the time of the Apostles.**

**But the leadership and authority of a bishop must never be conceived as an isolated role, for such a conception both creates impossible burdens for the bishop and corrupts the broad ecclesial bonds of co-responsibility that are essential to a healthy and faithful local church. It is for this reason that today's second reading from the letter to the Ephesians points so emphatically to the multitude of leadership roles intrinsic to**



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**the Church of Jesus Christ. In the prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers that Saint Paul speaks of, we see corollaries for our own day: priests, deacons and consecrated religious, DRE's, finance and pastoral councils, universities and movements, worship committees and lay formators. This is the architecture of co-responsibility in a local church that supports and complements the leadership of a bishop so that his ministry is constantly nourished by the breadth of the local church and also that he may come to understand more clearly where he has made mistaken decisions in leading the diocese. This culture of co-responsibility is no threat to the role of the bishop, but a great grace and consolation to him. It can be an immense joy for a bishop because it means that while he has unique authority, he is never alone.**



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**A fifth source of joy in the life of a bishop is his expansive role in embracing and advancing the whole of the sacramental life of the Church. A bishop is an ordinary minister of six of the seven sacraments and an official witness to matrimony. This brings the bishop the incredible privilege of ordaining men to the priesthood and celebrating regularly the Sacrament of Confirmation and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It also provides to the bishop grace-filled moments of seeing the sacraments celebrated throughout the Archdiocese, and the prayerfulness that each of our diverse communities bring to the encounter with Jesus Christ in the sacraments that they convey. In these beautiful celebrations the face of God will be deeply imprinted on your heart, and the faith of the people of God will be imprinted even more deeply on your soul.**



**The first reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah that you chose today sets forth the proclamation that would become Christ's own at the beginning of his public ministry. The Lord has come to bring glad tidings to the poor, to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to the prisoners. This is the transformation of the world that is an essential element of the proclamation of the Kingdom. Your new role as a bishop gives you both a particular freedom and a searing obligation to proclaim this transformation within the life of the Church and society as a whole. You are called to witness to the injustices that corrupt our tormented world: to stand with the undocumented and the poor; to protect the unborn and those at the end of life; to banish racism and every form of ethnic and cultural discrimination; and to protect the earth that is our**



**common home. In this dimension of your episcopal ministry, you will embrace the prophetic role that is intrinsic to the identity of the office you embrace today. And you will find joy in uniting yourself to the words and actions of Jesus Christ two thousand years ago.**

**Finally, the joys of a bishop can be found in his call to be a dreamer of dreams for the local church. We are called to be an evangelizing presence in the life of the world, proclaiming Jesus Christ to those who have not heard the Gospel or who have drifted away. We are called to be a Church that reaches out in welcome to every man and woman: todos, todos, todos. We are called to strenuously nurture family life in an age when it is atrophying. We are called to make our parishes centers of piercing personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. It is**



**easy to become preoccupied with the obstacles to those spiritual goals. But we as disciples of Jesus Christ are not defined by obstacles, but by the dreams that emerge from faith at every moment.**

**Jesus says in today's Gospel: "I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give to you."**

**Let this profound hope and conviction be your ultimate source of joy as you begin your episcopal ministry, Bishop Studniewski and Bishop Boxie, and let it be the source of joy for all of us in this blessed Archdiocese of Washington.**