

THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

“FROM ROME TO HOME : THE PRIMACY OF THE PETRINE OFFICE”

As we continue to contemplate the face of Jesus, who is the face of the Father’s mercy for all His beloved children, we take note that our own Archdiocese celebrates this year with “bookmarks” of sealing, opening and resealing the Jubilee Doors, echoing the actions of the Holy Father in Rome. It is notable, however, that the Holy Father does not celebrate these rites at St. Peter’s Basilica, typically regarded by Catholics as the “mother-church” of Roman Catholicism. Rather, he seals and opens the doors of the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

While the Holy Father is the Supreme Pontiff (from the latin “pontifex” meaning “bridge builder”) of the Roman Catholic Church, his primacy (headship or singular unmatched authority) comes from his position as Bishop of Rome, derived from his role as the traditional lineage as the successor of St. Peter upon whom Jesus built the Church. While we call him “Pope” (from the latin Papa, meaning father), he is rightfully called “The Bishop of Rome”, the “Vicar of Christ” (vicar meaning representative), “The Primate of Italy” and “Servant of the servants of God”. In the dogmatic constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, the Church makes a clear and definite distinction between the role of bishops as successors of the Apostles, and the role of “Supreme Pontiff” as successor of the chosen Apostle, Peter. The Church calls this doctrine, “apostolic succession”. While Christ gave the full sacramental authority of the Church to all twelve of the Apostles, he singled out Peter to lead them. In the swift development of the early Church, it soon became obvious that these twelve would need assistance in fulfilling their mandate to “go out to all the world”. Thus, by their authority, they conferred the sacrament of orders (ordination) on others, consecrating bishops from their direct authority. The lineage of each contemporary bishop in union with the Holy Father is unbroken from the Apostles.

It is because of that apostolic connection, and in a special way the connection of each bishop with the Bishop of Rome, that each bishop acts as a delegate of the Bishop of Rome to their particular territory. For us, Archbishop Lucas was delegated by Pope Benedict XVI as his Episcopal representative to the territory of the Archdiocese of Omaha. Every time our Archbishop teaches in an official capacity, he does so as part of the “body of bishops” that the Church calls the “Magisterium”. Every time our Archbishop acts, whether in a liturgical role or other ways, he does so in an official capacity through his mandate from the Bishop of Rome, the Holy Father.

Knowing this, it is only fitting that, when the Holy Father declares a Jubilee Year and opens the doors to the people of the Church, he also instructs his Bishops, in union with him, to open the doors of their cathedrals (the church of the Bishops local authority) so that all might share in the joy of this year of jubilation. Thus, the actions and prayers accompanying the opening of the Jubilee Door are the same throughout the Cathedrals of the world. What the Holy Father does in Rome our Archbishop will do in Omaha. What the Holy Father says in prayer in Rome our Archbishop will pray here at St. Cecilia’s. In this, we find voice to our claim to be the Catholic (universal) Church, for we pray as one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church for the salvation of souls and the divine mercy of God, who so loved the world that he sent his only Son to suffer and die, and to institute a Church that will continue until He comes again in glory. To him be all honor and praise, for now and forever. Amen.