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Episcopal ordination in St. Peter's Basilica: look your faithful in the eyes and know them

Vatican City, 20 March 2016 – This morning in St. Peter's Basilica the Holy Father conferred episcopal ordination to Msgr. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixit, M.C.C.J., Spain, currently secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and Msgr. Peter Bryan Wells, apostolic nuncio in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia.

The homily pronounced during the celebration was substantially the ritual homily in the Italian edition of the Roman Pontifical for the ordination of bishops, to which the Pope added some further reflections.

"It is Christ, indeed, Who in the ministry of the bishop continues to preach the Gospel of salvation and to sanctify believers through the sacraments of the faith. ... It is Christ Who preaches, Christ Who makes the Church, makes the Church fruitful, Christ Who guides: this is the bishop", emphasised Francis. "The episcopate is a service, not an honour. Therefore, the bishop must first live for the faithful, and not only preside over them; because, according to the Lord's mandate, the greatest must make himself the smallest, and he who presides must serve humbly. Be servants of all, from the greatest to the least among us. Of all, but always servants, in service".

"Proclaim the Word at every occasion, opportune or otherwise. ... Do not forget that the first task of the bishop is prayer. This Peter said, the day of the election of the seven deacons. The second task is the proclamation of the Word. The others follow. But the first is prayer. If a bishop does not pray, he can do nothing. To the Church entrusted to you be faithful guardians and dispensers of the mysteries of Christ, and placed by the Father at the head of His family, always follow the example of the Good Shepherd, Who knows His sheep: behind every paper you receive there is a person. Behind every letter you receive, there is a person. May every person be known to you, and may you be capable of knowing them".

"Love like a father and a brother those that God places in your care, especially presbyters and deacons", continued Pope Francis. "It makes one weep to hear that a priest has asked to speak with his bishop and the secretary tells him, 'He has many commitments, for the next three months he cannot receive you'. The closest to the bishop is his presbyter. If you do not love the closest to you, you will not be able to love everyone. Be close to priests, deacons, your collaborators in the ministry; be close to the poor, the helpless, and those who are in

need of welcome and help. Look the faithful in the eyes! Not obliquely, but in the eyes, to see into the heart. And may your faithful, whether he may be a priest, a deacon or a layperson, see into your heart. But always look people in the eyes".

"Watch over with love all the flock where the Holy Spirit has placed you to sustain God's Church. And do this in the name of the Father, whose image you render present; His Son, of whom you are constituted teachers, priests and pastors, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, Who gives life to the Church and whose power supports us in our weakness. May the Lord accompany you, and be close to you on the path you undertake today".
