

St. Patrick's Church, Fallowfield, Ottawa, ON—August 21, 2021

JESUIT PRIESTLY ORDINATION OF ADAM LALONDE, S.J.

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST TO HEAL AND RECONCILE

[Texts: Isaiah 61.1-3; Ephesians 4.1-7, 11-13; Matthew 9.35-38]

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

What a wonderful day this is when Christ blesses his church with a new priest, today in the person of Adam Lalonde, Jesuit religious. So, it is an honour for me on this happy occasion to welcome Adam's parents, his sister, brother-in-law and nephew, other family members and friends, who followed with a mixture of curiosity and amazement Adam's journey as he answered what he perceived as a calling from God.

Depuis onze ans, Adam est devenu un membre estimé d'une autre famille, celle de la Compagnie de Jésus. C'est pourquoi je salue plusieurs personnes présentes aujourd'hui : le chef de notre province jésuite canadienne bilingue, le père Erik Oland ; son adjoint exécutif, originaire de ce coin de Nepean, à Ottawa, le père Gilles Mongeau ; son chef de communauté au Regis College, le père Michael Rosinski. Plusieurs autres personnes se sont jointes à Adam en personne aujourd'hui pour prendre part à l'imposition des mains, un élément central du rite d'ordination, et d'autres encore se joignent à nous en direct. Bienvenue à tous et à toutes ! Welcome to all present in this church and participating via live-streaming.

For his warm welcome, we are grateful to Father Paul Shepherd, pastor of this church of St. Patrick's here in Fallowfield, one of the oldest churches of the Ottawa-Cornwall archdiocese. It even boasts the designation of a "national historical site", founded in 1866, one year before Canada's Confederation, or 155 years ago. In Canada that's a long time, but it is not old by other historical standards.

You see, we Jesuits of the world are celebrating a special jubilee year in 2021, the 500th anniversary of a Spanish soldier named Inigo de Loyola being gravely wounded by a cannonball in the siege of Pamplona. Not so much that battle as by an inner struggle that followed afterwards. For that seemingly ordinary cannonball shot began a spiritual dynamic by which Loyola was transformed from a gallant knight interested in worldly values to one who was changed by Our Lord Jesus Christ into someone who wanted to embrace the values proclaimed in the gospels.

Inigo's conversion and transformation took him to numerous places over many years. Ignatius, the new version of his Basque name described himself in his autobiography as a pilgrim. He saw himself as someone who learned by trial and error and by means of spiritual exercises what God's will was for him and how he might help others make the same discovery.

This year, the Society of Jesus invites their associates and friends such as the students and alumni of their schools, those who frequent their parishes and retreat centres and others to consider what might have been or can prove to be a "cannonball" event in their lives. These

might be occasions that caused them to embark on a change of direction and personal transformation.

I would like to suggest to you that the discovery of unmarked graves at residential schools across Canada has become a “cannonball” experience for the Church in Canada and all its members, including us Jesuits. This unparalleled moment is summoning everyone in our country to a profound conversion as regards our relationship with the indigenous peoples of this land. Like Loyola’s conversion, the process begun will take a long time and will probably include false steps, setbacks, new learnings—and deep interior conversion—that is to say, if we are to embark on God’s call being addressed to us in this moment. As we Jesuits of Canada and Haiti belong to the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, this will have repercussions too for our American brethren, whose legacy lies in the Indian Boarding Schools.

We enter upon this difficult and necessary process of conversion in the spirit of the Scriptural readings we have heard this morning. In the gospel, we saw Jesus going around to all the cities and villages of his time and place to proclaim the Good News of God’s Kingdom of justice, love and peace, which He would inaugurate by his ministry, and especially by his passion, death on the cross and resurrection to new life.

Jesuits are to carry on Jesus’ mission of healing the many people who go about not knowing where to turn for solace. They were in his time and are in our time “like sheep without a shepherd”. Accordingly, he showed them the compassion of his Sacred Heart. In our turn, we need to listen to and accompany on their journey the many—indigenous and others— who seek encouragement as the world aspires to leave Covid-19 behind and return to normalcy. Above all, our world here in Canada desires to establish, or re-establish right relationships with one another and, in God’s time, reconciliation.

Jesus tells his disciples that the task of harvesting the seeds of righteousness is great and the workers to do so are few. We must pray then that the Lord of the harvest—our heavenly Father—will call and send more labourers into the harvest. Perhaps there are individuals here today or watching remotely who sense that call; let us pray that they will have the same generosity as Adam in answering the vocation that Isaiah described as that of “bringing good news to the oppressed, of binding up the broken-hearted...of comforting all who mourn...of giving people the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit”.

In writing to the Ephesians, St. Paul explained what the fruit of living this way might be. He speaks of a variety of ways in which the People of God are now formed into the Body of Christ and blessed with differing spiritual gifts. Though people serve God with a variety of spiritual endowments, we learn that it is God who brings about a unity of minds and hearts, one which we should strive to foster and maintain. Cleansed as we were in the smudging ceremony that served as our penitential rite this morning, we are called to live out day by day the unity that Christ is working out—long-term—among us.

Today's ordination ritual has numerous features, each of which could be elaborated at length. I wish to focus on one of these, which will be articulated in French. It is a vivid sign, a symbolic gesture that lies at the heart of the ceremony of priestly ordination. In a few moments, I will anoint Adam's hands with the Oil of Chrism. That outward sign, along with the other accompanying signs, points to the hidden action of the Holy Spirit.

The role and service which Adam is to fulfil is made clear in the prayer that accompanies that anointing. We will pray that this powerful anointing will bind Adam more closely to Christ the High Priest.

This is not Adam's first anointing with Chrism. That first anointing took place on his chest at his Baptism by Father Francis McEvoy at St. Elizabeth's church. At his baptism Adam was bonded to Christ; it was the moment when he came to share in the life of Our Lord, in which the wound in his nature, as we may describe original sin, was first healed.

At the moment of our baptism the minister prayed over us the following words: "God has freed you from all sin and given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and welcomed you into his holy people; God now anoints you with the Chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his holy body."

At Confirmation, Adam was anointed with Chrism again, this time on the forehead at St. Monica Church by Thunder Bay's Bishop Fred Colli then an Auxiliary Bishop in Ottawa. The words, then, were different: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." And that gift was precisely all that he needed to live the life of a disciple of Christ as a growing young man: "wisdom and understanding, right judgement and courage, knowledge and reverence, wonder and awe in God's presence."

In those sacraments of initiation, the foundations of Adam's adult life, his vocation from the Lord, were being laid down. And if that is true for him, it is true for each one of us who is baptized, each one of us who is confirmed. As we offer today another prayer of anointing, we can renew in ourselves the grace of our baptism and confirmation.

Today I will anoint Adam a third time. This time the Chrism will be smeared on his hands and through that outward action and the further gift of the Holy Spirit he will become a priest and a fellow worker with the bishops wherever in years to come he will be assigned by his religious superiors.

Next year this will mean a combined year of pastoral activity and ongoing study, with Adam moving to Vancouver to assist Father Robert Allore at St. Mark's parish on the campus of the University of British Columbia while writing a thesis on St. Bonaventure. Adam shared with me that spiritual direction and medieval thought and history are the realities he is most passionate about. He says he would be very happy teaching eventually at a post-secondary level while also doing pastoral work such as retreats and chaplaincy. Still, he knows that obedience could take him anywhere.

From this day on, Adam's vocation in life, given by the Lord, is being given a new impulse as he prepares himself to preach the Gospel, to offer the sacrifice of the Mass and to care for God's people: hearing confessions and absolving penitents, which is a long-standing Jesuit ministerial focus. He will also baptize adults and children, witness couples embarking on a life-long commitment to marriage and do his best to sanctify every aspect of the lives of the holy people of God.

Today the priests gathered here or participating by live-streaming can take this occasion to renew the sense of their priestly anointing. That call is expressed in these words: "that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth and that the family of nations, made one in Christ, may become God's one, holy people."

C'est dans le symbole du chrême, dont est tiré le nom du Christ, que nous voyons notre réalité la plus profonde. Nous sommes son peuple oint. C'est ce que nous sommes, au-delà de toute autre identité liée à la race, à la culture, à l'histoire familiale, au succès ou à l'échec.

Au sein de cette compagnie de disciples, un prêtre trouve son rôle et le service qu'il est appelé à rendre : être un berger, veiller, maintenir ensemble le peuple saint de Dieu. En tant que peuple oint de Dieu, nous recevons et accueillons aujourd'hui un prêtre nouvellement oint.

So, my dear son Adam, soon to be called "Father Adam", may God and his love be with you always. May our Blessed Mother keep you close within her maternal embrace and may your patron saints inspire and protect you.

And I pray that your family, your Jesuit confreres, friends, and the people you serve will support you through prayer and loyal friendship all the days of your priestly life.