

**Sermon on The Consecration of  
the Very Reverend Hosam Elias Naoum  
June 14, 2020  
The Most Reverend Suheil S. Dawani**

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ: this afternoon we come together—both here in this Cathedral and online from around the world—for an important moment in the life of our Diocese. For today, through the power of God’s Spirit, we will be consecrating Hosam Elias Naoum to the office of Bishop Coadjutor within the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Now there are two important meanings to this title of *Bishop Coadjutor*. First of all, the title of *Bishop* means that from today onward Dean Hosam will join the ranks of Episcopal leadership not only here in this Diocese, but also within the Worldwide Anglican Communion.

But the second meaning is equally as important. For the title *Coadjutor* means that, in due course, then-Bishop Hosam will succeed me as Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem. At that same time, he will also become one of the Heads of the Churches here in the City of the Holy One.

And so today is the first step towards his assuming a greater mantle of leadership within Christ’s One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church here in Jerusalem.

Hosam, in this coming year as Coadjutor Bishop, we must join our efforts, working hard at all levels: ecumenically, institutionally, and in our relationships with our sister churches and partners, both locally and internationally.

This is the basic compass that will guide you in your future leadership.

Unfortunately, I was not given the opportunity of a smooth transition as Coadjutor Bishop. Therefore, we have to work together, you and I, hand-in-hand, making wise decisions to lead the Diocese especially in these difficult times.

Because of this, now is an important time for us to reflect together about the office of Bishop, both as we have heard from the Scriptures, and as I have personally experienced it over these past fourteen years.

We begin with the Scriptures.

In his First Letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul lists some of the traits of a Bishop. As we heard, a Bishop is to be “above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money.”

We will return to some of these qualities in a few moments. But because these traits are all features of an even more profound biblical image of a Bishop, I would like to instead focus my reflections on this greater image.

The image of which I speak, is that of a *servant*. A Bishop is called to be, first of all, a servant of God and a servant of God’s people.

“Here is my servant,” the Prophet Isaiah proclaims in our first reading. “He is my chosen one, in whom my soul delights.” Of course, in this passage, Isaiah is not speaking directly about a Bishop, but about God’s promised Messiah.

Still, if the Prophet can speak about the Messiah as being a servant, how much more should this be true of a Bishop?

As Jesus would later say about himself: “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Matt 20:28a). And as a servant of God, like our Lord, it is necessary to stand for what is just and right, and to defend it, with perseverance, even in the face of opposition.

In this same passage, our Lord also tells his disciples, “whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant” (Matt 20:26b).

Here, the word that Jesus uses for *servant* in the Greek is the same word that the Early Church would later use for the title of *Deacon* (Rom 16:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13).

This is an important thing for us to keep in mind for our service today. That’s because everyone who is ordained in our Church is first of all ordained as a Deacon. That ordination comes first—and it never goes away.

And so if a one is later ordained a Priest, that Priest remains first a Deacon. And if that Priest is later consecrated as a Bishop, that Bishop also remains first a Deacon.

Even if that Bishop is later elevated to the position of Archbishop, then that Archbishop too is first of all a Deacon—a servant of God and of God’s people.

Although this is a clear and simple teaching from our Lord, it is also one that is very easy to forget. Jesus had to remind his disciples of this truth over and over again, as we often hear in our Sunday Gospels.

That’s because over time they became more interested in power, prestige, and riches. Indeed, they quarreled with each other over these things. This is why Paul felt it necessary to warn Timothy about these temptations when writing to him about the office of Bishop.

It is also why Jesus’ last words to the Apostle Peter were about servanthood, as we just heard in our Gospel.

For on the night of Jesus’ arrest, Peter had denied Jesus three times. We know that he did this out of fear—fear that he too would be arrested and maybe even put to death. Unlike our Lord, Peter put his own life ahead of being faithful to his Master.

And so on the Galilean seashore, Jesus gently confronts Peter about his denials. Three times our Lord asks him, “Simon, Son of John, do you love me?”

Each time Peter assures Jesus of his love. But each time Jesus also challenges Peter to show him his love not only by words, but by deeds.

“Feed my sheep,” Jesus says to him. In other words, “Care for my people. Show your love for me by loving them. See my face upon their faces.”

Just in case Peter missed the extent to which Jesus expected him to be a servant, he said to him these words: “Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.”

Put another way, in his new role as the Chief Apostle, Peter would discover that his life would no longer be his own. It would belong to God in the service of his people.

If I may speak now more personally: as someone who has served as both Bishop and Archbishop, I can tell you that I’ve found these words of Jesus to be very true. As a Bishop and especially an Archbishop, your life is no longer your own.

Hosam, your life from now on will change dramatically. You will experience loneliness, sleepless nights, constant phone calls and demands, hard and painful decisions—family sacrifices and endless challenges.

And so, in my experience, what Jesus told Peter was true. The life of a Bishop is not about luxury. It is about taking on a heavy responsibility in the service of the Gospel.

As we know, all Christians are called to take up their crosses and follow Jesus. But the cross of a Bishop is an especially heavy one to bear. It means having a full and honest commitment to your ministry, where your mind and your spirit are pulled in more different directions than you ever thought possible.

That's especially the case now in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, something that will remain with us for many years to come, in one way or another.

Yet, because the responsibilities of a Bishop are so heavy, there is no way that one person can bear them alone. As a Bishop and eventually as an Archbishop, Dean Hosam will need support from two major directions: He will need vertical support and horizontal support. Together they form the cross of salvation.

The vertical support he will need comes in the form of prayer and worship. As an Archbishop, I could not function without being in constant prayer. More than anyone, a Bishop must be nourished by God's Word and Sacrament on a daily basis. That's because there are so many important decisions to be taken, and so much work to be done. And so we need the constant guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit to help us remain as faithful servants to our call.

But this vertical beam of the cross must also be joined by the horizontal one. And so as a Bishop, Dean Hosam will need the support of those around him.

He will need this first of all from his family, especially his wife and children.

But he will also need this support from the larger Church: from his fellow clergy, from our institutional leaders, from our International and Ecumenical partners—indeed, from every member of the greater Body of Christ. He will need our prayers, our encouragement, our teamwork, and our own willingness to be servants of the Lord under his leadership.

In a short time, my dear Hosam, you will lead the Diocese of Jerusalem as the Captain of this ship.

On this important day in the life of our Diocese, I am proud to say that the Diocese of Jerusalem has a strong presence, locally and internationally, through the ministry of our institutions, through ecumenical partnerships with sister Churches, with the wider Anglican Communion, and with the local governments where our Diocese is present.

I am delighted to say that the greatness of our image stems from transparency, integrity, and humility.

Make sure, dear Hosam, to keep this magnificent image and good reputation alive. And make sure too, to keep the legacy of our fathers and forefathers alive, maintaining the Christian presence of the Living Stones in this City and the region, working for the Christian Unity of the Body of Christ.

I will keep you in my prayers. May God bless you and strengthen you to continue the journey of faith. Amen.