

**PRAYER VIGIL IN PREPARATION FOR
THE EPISCOPAL ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF
H.E. REV. MSGR. ALDO BERARDI, O.S.S.T.
Our Lady of Arabia Cathedral, Bahrain
17th March 2023**



GOSPEL READING
(John 20:19-23)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

MEDITATION

Like the disciples of Jesus “on the evening of that first day of the week” in Jerusalem, we are gathered here in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia. The doors are not locked in fear of the Jews or anybody else. However, we too have our hours and days of sorrows and need fresh hearts. This evening we are gathered in a spirit of hope, confidence, and joy. We pray with and for the bishop elect, our brother Aldo Berardi who will be ordained tomorrow. We believe that Jesus, the risen Lord, is present in our midst. We cannot see Him with our bodily eyes, but with the eyes of faith, the eyes of a believing heart. Jesus is looking at us from the crucifix in the sanctuary and from his real presence in the piece of bread in the monstrance. He is greeting us, the anxious disciples, with the words he used 2000 years ago: “Peace be with you.”

We all know the feeling of fear after a bad experience. We can understand that the disciples were in fear after the horrible crucifixion of their master on Golgotha. They were paralysed by shock. Introverted in common mourning they were no more open to another reality. They had completely forgotten the word of Jesus, that after all the pain and death he would rise from the dead. The resurrection was beyond their understanding. To release them from the shock intervention from outside was needed: “Jesus came and stood in their midst.” It also happens at this moment as we are gathered: “Jesus comes and stands in our midst.” Right now!

There is no need to repress the past and to deny what happened on Golgotha. Jesus shows “his hands and his side” as his ID to the disciples. He is the victorious lamb, sacrificed for us. The Church is the space in which Jesus the crucified and risen Lord remains present. He stands amid the disciples as the warrant of life. Breathing on the disciples Jesus awakes the shattered disciples to life. He who is the life fills us with the Holy Spirit who is the giver of life. This reminds us of

the moment when God created man and breathed life into the nostrils of the lifeless body of Adam. Now, it is Jesus who breathes life into the depressed disciples. With and in Jesus, the new creation starts, and the disciples are called and empowered to be agents of the new creation: “Receive the Holy Spirit!”

“As the Father has sent me, I send you!” Tomorrow, we shall be witnesses of such a commissioning. For, each bishop is sent by the Risen Lord like the first disciples and called to be an agent of reconciliation and peace. The words of Jesus are effective. When he greets the disciples with the words “peace be with you”, peace is instilled into the hearts of the disciples. The mourning is turned into joy: “The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.” Jesus takes them immediately into duty with a commission: “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.” The Holy Spirit is given for the work of reconciliation.

A bishop is called to continue the work of Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus he must gather what has gone astray and find what has been lost. Such task exceeds the capacity of an individual person however gifted he may be. It is possible for the one who strictly follows the Lord and opens himself to the Holy Spirit. This evening we pray that Fr. Aldo Berardi be such a follower of Jesus who in humility repeats the words of Simon Peter: “Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you.” Tomorrow the Lord will give him the same mandate that he has given Simon Peter 2000 years ago: “Feed my lambs – tend my sheep!”