

Here in Mexico for the priestly ordination of two of our Assumptionist brothers. I expect the Church to be filled to overflowing on Thursday, not only with the parishioners of the main Church in Tlilapan, but with busloads of indigenous folks from the mountains surrounding the parish. Our two brothers have served those communities faithfully for the past two years, and our brother Chano himself comes from an indigenous background.

I kidded with the two of them at breakfast this morning, saying that the best thing about arriving at this day is no longer having to submit themselves to annual evaluations, a staple of the lengthy years of formation. In fact, this can only be a brief respite given the scrutiny to which the priesthood is subject these days. And I want to say that's fair enough on more than one count. In a time of laxity, of moral failure, a corresponding vigilance is required. More essentially, the texts of the ordination rite make clear the awesomeness of the vocation to which Chano and Rodel are being called. To be configured to Jesus Christ, offering the daily sacrifice at the altar, puts the priest on the front lines with a visibility, like it or not, that cannot be taken away.

But here's the rub. The visibility is representational. At the most profound level, the Baptist gets it right: I must decrease, so that He might increase. The Gentiles love to lord it over those in their charge, Jesus says. IT SHALL NOT BE THAT WAY WITH YOU. This foundational humility is the key to the renewal of priestly life.

Our founder, Fr. d'Alzon, insisted on the quality of "disinterestedness" for those living Assumptionist life. What he meant was that we should love the truth because the truth is lovable in itself, and not on account of any private benefit we might derive from it. Loving the truth above all presupposes an interior freedom that eschews a number of temptations to which priestly life is susceptible: the lure of honor and being well-connected, the subtleties of power, etc. To be configured to Jesus Christ (the truth in person) is to be configured to the Cross, to that daily dying to self which is the real source of our freedom to serve.

By Fr. Dennis Gallagher, A.A., Provincial of the North American Province