

**REMARKS
BY ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA
VESPER SERVICE FOR THE INVESTITURE OF THE MONSIGNORS
BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHEDRAL
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2005**

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:7-16

Honored Monsignori, Family and Friends of our Monsignori:

We gather this evening to give praise and thanks to God for the many gifts He has showered upon our Church of Detroit during its 172-year history. In a special way, this evening, we thank the good Lord for the blessing of priestly ministry; as we recognize these fifteen priests, we affirm not only their outstanding service, but we also praise the Lord for the ministry of priests throughout the decades—here and throughout the world.

In tonight's very simple ceremony, I will be sharing with our honorees the document naming them a monsignor, a decree issued with the blessing and authorization of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. This is an important point to emphasize: the honor being conferred does not come from me or from this local Church, but is from our Holy Father. Tonight's gathering, therefore, unites our local Church with the Universal Church in a special bond of solidarity and service.

St. Paul teaches us that when any one member of the body is honored, the whole body rejoices. Such are fitting thoughts for tonight's gathering. As we honor fifteen of you, we are also implicitly affirming the goodness and dignity of

our whole presbyterate. And none of us as priests could carry out our ministry without the loving support and example of our families and parishioners. There is a wonderful and powerful “mutuality of ministry” we share and celebrate here tonight. An honor being given to any one person also affirms the dignity and gifts of every other priest and all members of the lay faithful from our parishes.

Theologically and spiritually, as you know full well, the most important day of your life was the day of your Baptism into the Death-Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Your priestly vocation was a deepening and intensification of that baptismal relationship and commitment, configuring you to the person of Christ, the Head of His Body, the Church. Now, as monsignors, you continue to build on that same foundation of your baptismal and priestly character. Even with your new title, you are still and always a priest, a father and brother in the family of faith.

When I petitioned for the naming of new monsignors, I had in mind several things. First of all, I wanted to acknowledge and thank each of you for outstanding service “over and above” the call of duty. In one way or another, each of you has stood out from your peers because of the generosity of your service, because of your willingness to assume extra responsibilities and positions of leadership. In some cases, the longevity of your service, of itself, is a powerful witness and a compelling sign of encouragement and challenge for the rest of us. Whatever the

circumstance, I trust that you know in your heart how and why this honor is being given to you today.

Secondly, as I have already stated, conferring of titles and honors is an opportunity for celebrating and affirming our presbyterate and, indeed, building up our whole local Church. In a Church as large and diverse as ours, in a community with such a long history and tradition of faith, it is appropriate that some of our brothers bear the title of monsignor.

In general, we could say that the honor being conferred upon you today is also recognition of the work of the Church at the level of the Archdiocese and as part of the Church Universal. The reason most of you are being recognized has chiefly to do with the way you have helped build up our whole local Church and our presbyterate—reaching out in ecumenical concerns, being sensitive to the needs of people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds, preparing future priestly and lay leaders for the Church, and sharing in my administrative responsibilities in the governance of this local Church. As St. Paul reminds us in tonight’s passage from Ephesians 4, all the various ministries and gifts that are given have one same purpose—to build up the unity and faith of the Church that we might all come to the full stature of Christ, building up Christ's Body in truth and love.

By happy providence of scheduling, we gather this evening on a great feast for our Church in the United States—the feast of the North American martyrs,

Saints John deBrebeuf, Isaac Jogues, and Companions. Their martyrdom reminds us of our call to be witnesses to the Gospel in all that we say and do. A new title of honor brings with it even more responsibility to be a sign of hope and encouragement, a voice and a presence for the unity of the Church and for the renewal of our society. You have already given wonderful testimony through your years of priestly ministry; I pray that with these new honors you receive tonight, you will rededicate yourself all the more intensely to working for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, a Kingdom of truth and justice, a Kingdom of love and peace.

This evening, as we rejoice in the honor being given, let us also remember that, ultimately, all honor and glory is due to God, the source of every blessing: To him be praise now and forever. Amen. Alleluia!