

Homily
Rite of Election – Ss. Anne & Joachim
March 9, 2025

“One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”
Dear friends, I am happy to welcome all of you today to this Rite of Election. I know that we have come from all parts of our diocese, and it is a joy to gather as a family, a family united in faith.

The Gospel passage we just heard is always read on this First Sunday of Lent. It tells us of the temptations of Jesus in the desert. After many days in the desert, he was tempted by the evil one to turn aside from God’s plan of salvation, and to take the easier way. The devil tried to distract Jesus, to get him to take his eyes off of his Father. But Jesus fended off these temptations, because he knew there was no other way than God’s way. The road he set out on, the road that would lead him to the cross, was the way to our salvation, and Jesus was determined to stay the course. No matter how difficult that road might be, Jesus would remain true to his Father’s plan so that we might have life in him.

As we begin this season of Lent, we are on our own journey, our own road of conversion and grace. Each one of us is called to conversion, and during these forty days, we try with God’s help to turn away from distractions and to be entirely focused on him. We’re tempted just as Jesus was, tempted to take an easier way, to go the way of the world, to give in to our basest desires. But with God’s help, we too can remain faithful and discover the life that he has prepared for us.

A great number of you have come here today because you desire to enter into full communion with Christ and his Church, through baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist. On this occasion, I am privileged to receive you and welcome you into our family of faith, and I thank God that he has invited you into this intimate communion with him. Through baptism, we are joined with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are made sharers in his divine life, and we become adopted sons and daughters of God. In the sacrament of confirmation, the Holy Spirit pours out his gifts upon us to strengthen and confirm us in the life of faith. And through the Eucharist, we receive Christ himself as he gives his body and blood for our salvation. Through these sacraments, you will share deeply in the life of God, and this Rite of Election, this Call to Conversion, sets you on the final steps of your journey to this communion with Christ.

You might know that right now the Church is celebrating a jubilee year, a special year of pilgrimage and conversion. And Pope Francis, whom we pray for during this time of his illness, has given us a theme for this jubilee: “Pilgrims of Hope.” We are all pilgrims, people on the way. A pilgrimage is a sacred journey, a journey of grace, and our destination is God himself. Every day of our lives, we take another step on our pilgrimage, looking for God’s presence, and asking for his divine assistance. But as the Holy Father tells us, we are “pilgrims of hope.” In other words, we move forward on our journey, impelled by our hope in Christ himself. Hope is more than just optimism or wishful thinking. Christian hope is absolute confidence in God, who always fulfills his promises. We move forward in hope, because Christ has already walked this journey for us. He endured the temptations of the desert. He has walked the way of the cross, he

has risen to new life, and he has ascended to heaven. He is our hope. He is the reason we are here, why we are on this journey at all. And rather than put our hopes in the temptations of this world, with all its attractions and pleasures, we place our hope in Jesus, who promises us so much more. He promises us eternal life.

So today, my dear friends, we thank God that you are here, and that you have chosen to make this pilgrimage with us. I pray that during these days of Lent, as you prepare to finally be received by Christ into his Church, you will be filled with the spirit of hope that draws us all. I pray that you will know the peace of placing your trust in him, and that you will keep your eyes always on Jesus. The entire Church is praying with you and for you, and we look forward to celebrating together at the altar of our Lord.