



Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Ph.D.
Archbishop of Las Vegas

May 30, 2025

Priestly Ordination of
Magnus Igbowke

Guardian Angel Cathedral
303 Cathedral Way
Las Vegas, NV 89109

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Today is a jubilee day in the Archdiocese of Las Vegas as one of our own steps forward to be ordained into the office of priesthood. This is a long-awaited day for Deacon Magnus, a man who for years has immersed himself in spiritual formation, theological studies and in the school of life, both here in the United States and in his homeland of Nigeria.

Magnus was born on October 19, 1979, son of the late Emmanuel and Esther Igbokwe. He is one of seven siblings, including his own twin sister Maureen, twin siblings Victor and Victoria, brothers Francis, William and younger brother, Father Emmanuel Igbokwe, ordained to the priesthood in 2021 for the Nigerian Diocese of Okigwe.

Following 13 years of philosophical and theological formation in his home diocese, Magnus came to the United States in 2017 where he earned a master's degree in clinical psychology at the University of California. Even as he pursued his advanced studies in a secular setting, he maintained a strong spiritual life, remaining close to the Sacraments, seeking the guidance of a spiritual director, and living out the corporal works of mercy.

It is noteworthy that eight days after his birth, Magnus was given a native Igbo name "Chinedu," meaning "God leads" or "God is in control." This name has served as a major leitmotiv in Magnus's life and ministry.

To that end, Magnus moved to Las Vegas in 2020 to be closer to family, and then applied for seminary the following year. In 2022, I sent him to Mount Angel Seminary in Oregon to complete his master's degree in divinity.

He has been the beneficiary of pastoral assignments under the tutelage of strong pastor-mentors at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Holy Family, La Virgen of Guadalupe in Mesquite, and most recently St. Joseph, Husband of Mary, under the sage and seasoned leadership of Father Camillus, Pastor of St. Joseph Parish here in Las Vegas.

Dear Magnus, on May 22, 1976, I was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Seattle. For nearly 50 years, I have closely observed the life and ministry of dozens of priests here, in the Diocese of Helena, and in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

In each of those dioceses I have identified a cadre of outstanding priests whose ministry stands out in bold relief, marked by deep satisfaction, pastoral productivity, spiritual happiness and contagious joy.

Today, on your Ordination Day, I want to share with you some particular qualities that are common among these standout priests, many of whom are here today in this assembly. They are qualities that I hope you will both appropriate and emulate as you take your first steps of priestly service in the Archdiocese of Las Vegas.

- (1) The first quality I described for you, dear Magnus, is drawn from the very heart of the Second Vatican Council. It is a quality that every priest holds in common with every person who is baptized into Christ Jesus.

This is, of course, the universal call to holiness, described by the late Cardinal Avery Dulles as the single most distinguishing feature of the Second Vatican Council.

The Council documents are clear and compelling: Holiness is our common call. Holiness is the tie that binds us all together. Holiness is a spiritual mark that flows from Baptism and is nourished through ardent prayer and participation in the Sacraments.

Pope Benedict wrote words that I endorse wholeheartedly. He wrote "The priest must be a man who knows Jesus intimately, who has encountered him and learned to love him. For this reason, the priest must be above all else a man of prayer, a truly spiritual man. Without a strong spiritual substance, he cannot long endure his ministry." (*Called to Communion*, p.128.)

Magnus, in their longing for holiness of life, your people will look to you. They will seek from you sound preaching and teaching, for, as the Scripture has it, "Faith comes first through hearing, and what is heard is the word of Christ." (Rom.10,17) This is why the Council Fathers have underscored the ministry of the Word in clear and uncomplicated terms when they wrote, "Priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all." (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* Chapter 2,3.)

Pope Francis astutely observed that the homily is the best indicator of the closeness of a priest to his people. I ask you to never allow your ministry of the Word to be dulled by habit, dampened by routine or blunted by a temptation to please or appease popular opinion.

The Introduction to the Lectionary offers this useful admonition. "[The] homily should be truly the fruit of meditation, carefully prepared, neither too long nor too short, and suited for all those present, even children and the uneducated." (no. 24.)

The second source of nourishment your people will seek from you is found in the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy, the very heartbeat of priestly holiness and the source and summit of the life of the entire Church.

Magnus, from this day forward, you will have the unmerited privilege of celebrating Eucharistic Liturgy for your people, an experience you will quickly identify as the apex of ministry and the ultimate source of priestly happiness. We rejoice that today that great adventure begins for you.

- (2) In your pastoral ministry, you will encounter many people carrying heavy burdens, people beset with sickness, setbacks, and hardships of every kind. The second quality we find in this group of exemplary priests is the virtue of hope. In the words of St. Paul, "and this hope will not leave us disappointed..." (Romans 5:5.) Saint John Paul II wrote, that "hope in Jesus the Good Shepherd will fill your heart with compassion, prompting you to draw near to the pain of every suffering man and woman. (*Pastores Gregis*)" I ask you to take to heart the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and to have a tender heart and closeness to your people in their hour of need. Teach them what the Council Fathers have taught us, that "through Christ and in Christ the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from him, they will simply overwhelm us." (GS22) In a word, Magnus, I ask you to be a witness to hope for the people you are sent to serve.
- (3) The outstanding priests who I bring to your attention are agents of healing and reconciliation in their respective communities. We live in a world beset by conflict and division, political polarization, endless litigation, and internet toxicity. We need our priests and leaders to be agents of healing and reconciliation. You have heard me say before and I say it again. I want our priests to prefer dialogue over diatribe, persuasion over polemics, and invitation over invective. I want you to take to heart the words of then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, The Church is by nature "the home of forgiveness" and the domicile of reconciliation. This is my hope for you, Magnus, and my third hope for you in your ministry among our people.
- (4) The next quality that is found in the lives of these special priests is a commitment a life of spiritual, physical and emotional equilibrium. Strive to lead a balanced life in the face of the many demands that will be placed on your shoulders. Seek harmony in your life through personal prayer, private study, appropriate rest and recreation, regular fraternity with brother priests, and strong relationships with your family of origin. So too, let your life of celibacy freely embraced, allow you to be available to your people, serving them with a selfless and undivided heart. Listen again to the wise counsel of St. Charles Borromeo, speaking to the priests of his Archdiocese: "Do not neglect to take care of yourself, nor give so generously to others that you have nothing left for you." That is my hope for you, Deacon Magnus.
- (5) The fifth quality of our outstanding pastors is simple and unadorned. He knows what he does not know. He therefore surrounds himself with wise and knowledgeable women and men, drawing from the wellspring of their knowledge and expertise. The Council Fathers wrote, "Pastors also know that they themselves were not meant by Christ to shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the Church toward the world." (LG30) Consultation, collaboration, and collegiality are hallmarks of sound pastoral leadership.

- (6) Those priests whom I call to your attention share still another compelling quality that sets them apart from the pack. They prize laughter and levity as medicine for the soul, allowing their leadership and life to be marked by humor and lightheartedness. Author Richard Heffern wrote that "Laughter is an important side effect of living deeply." Dr. Bernie Siegel wrote "He who laughs last." And the inimitable St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "Oh Lord, spare me from sour faced saints."

Dear Magnus, on this your ordination day I offer you these special qualities to help you lead a life of rich and rewarding priestly ministry--all hallmarks of priesthood well lived and people well served.

You are now ready to lay down your life before the Church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit and the laying on to become a presbyter of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear Magnus, we wish you a lifetime of happiness and holiness, a life marked by that special joy that comes to those who know, love, and serve the Lord, who is here, ever in our midst, "as one who serves." Amen. Alleluia!

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