

THE NEW PARISH PRIEST

Translated from the Italian by Benjamin DeMaio Montalbano

On Sunday, January 31, 2003, in Calitri in the parish of San Canio, don Maurizio Palmieri was consecrated as the parish priest at the 11:30 mass. His Excellency, Bishop Salvatore Nunnari, presided over the ceremony before a crowded church that included both civil and military authorities. His Excellency stated that, after the sudden death of Don Siro, don Maurizio would be the parish priest of the Church of Saint Canio, effective January 1 of this year and continuing for the next nine years. The Bishop then said, "Dear Don Maurizio. The gift that you have made possible with your ready and generous availability has enriched our church and rendered the path of this community fruitful. This celebration— which I personally wanted notwithstanding your initial reticence because of your reserved nature—is not and must not be the exaltation of the man, of the priest, but the clear presentation of the priestly mission of a parish priest, not according to the canons of law, which we are also called to observe, but to the light of the Word of God which today, especially, is so rich with signs and suggestions. The priest is the one who, as if he were Jeremiah, speaks the word of God, and who appears from the reading to have the personality of Jeremiah, which personality is filled with sensitivity, uncertainty, and timidity. It is something like our human situation, which intensifies just at the precise instant of the divine call. The Lord never leaves us alone and it is He Who, through the Holy Spirit, has consecrated you and has sent you to

this community." In conclusion, His excellency said: "My dear don Maurizio, with patient hope, offer, first with life, which is the most believable prophesy, to your parishioners the best path for everything, you will love. . . loving, and tell each and every one that the common calling of the bap-



Don Maurizio Palmieri

tized is consummated in love."

Then, turning to the faithful, the bishop said: "Please welcome don Maurizio as father, brother, friend, and companion on your earthly pilgrimage, for whatever time the Lord may will." Turning then to Don Maurizio's mother, he reminded her that she is the only human defense between the priest and Our Lord, while he reminds Don Maurizio of the words of Jesus, "Who loves his father and mother is not worthy of me." Nonetheless, you will rely on your mother's heart to contemplate and serve the Lord.

Don Maurizio replied with a beautiful speech that moved many of the faithful and reminded them of what His Excellency the Bishop said to him the day of their meeting in the bishop's palace. "In pazienza Crucis et in caritate Deo." In pazienza Crucis

ritite Deo." In pazienza Crucis is the truth of the ministry, the confirmation of the priestly existence; in Caritate Deo is the hymn to charity, the purpose of our life, our realization, and our vocation. Don Maurizio remembered the moment of his arrival in Calitri. It was a moment that was not very happy for the community, due to the sickness and then the death of the lamented Don Siro, who is still remembered and thanked today for the love that he professed and lived. Then he stated the guidelines under which he would work as parish priest of Calitri: To serve the community in truth (in caritate Deo). To be simply a priest among you, a priest of Christ with a single motive, "To announce to you the Word of God, because it is the only Word that can save, without trying to be pleasing to men, and finding for them words of adulation, but to be pleasing to God (Confer Saint Paul) Who has called me and has entrusted this ministry to me." And so, Don Maurizio, among the applause of all the faithful present, gave thanks for the warm welcome received since the first moment. In the afternoon, in the crypt of the church of San Canio, the meetings with the new parish priest continued with joyous feasting.

Franco Ciccoira