

Homily based on the readings from September 4, 2025 (Colossians 1.9-14; Luke 5.1-11)

As some of you may be aware, it was the practice – for many centuries – to hold a *coronation* for a newly elected pope. Just as when King Charles assumed the throne of Great Britain, the incoming pope would have a *crown* placed on his head. The papal crown – or tiara, to be more precise – consisted of three separate coronets, symbolizing the pontiff’s threefold responsibility as the *father* of princes and kings, the *ruler* of the world, and the *vicar* of Christ. By the middle of the twentieth century, though, it became much less common for popes to wear the tiara, and Blessed John Paul I ended the practice of papal coronations altogether. As a curious side note, the last papal tiara – which was worn briefly by Pope Saint Paul VI – is actually in the United States, on display in the crypt beneath the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

Rather than a coronation, the last five popes have instead opted for an *installation*. Although the pope no longer wears a crown, he still receives two important objects that symbolize his Petrine ministry. The first is the pallium – a lambswool band he wears around his neck, representing his role as our chief shepherd. The second is the Fisherman’s Ring, a signet ring with an emblem depicting Saint Peter casting his net while holding the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The point, of course, is that Christ himself is both a shepherd and a fisherman. He is a shepherd in that he cares for his flock, paying special attention to any of his sheep who witlessly wander away. He is a fisherman in that he ceaselessly reaches out into the deep to gather more souls to himself. Jesus in turn entrusted these ministries to Simon Peter – and eventually to *his* successor, Leo XIV, the current vicar of Christ on earth. As Catholics, we can rest assured that the Holy Father – along with his brother bishops – will manifest and preserve this God-given mission throughout all ages, until the end of time.

Although we can and we should be immeasurably grateful for the Apostolic ministry of our bishops, we must never forget that each of us is called to participate – in our own particular way – in the process of evangelization. While Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, he is not the *entirety* of the Church. As baptized Christians, we are *all* members of the Body of Christ. Even though very few of us will ever wear a woolen pallium or a golden signet ring, let alone a triple tiara, we all share in the obligation of giving witness to the Gospel – to our families, to our friends, to our coworkers, to *anyone* we encounter in our daily lives. Despite being frail and feeble sinners, just like Simon Peter, we too can be fishers of men – as long as we have the *faith* and the *courage* to accept Christ's invitation to *follow him*.