



## **Homily – Institution**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
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St Charles' Seminary  
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It is of course just a few short weeks ago that we gathered in the Mother Church of our archdiocese to share in the extraordinary moment of grace when God, through my ministry as bishop of this diocese, transformed eight men, all your brothers, into living and powerful signs that he continues to lead and shepherd his people through the ministry of priests. Tonight, in a different but still important way, God will again be at work in Tung as the Church commissions him as an Acolyte for our archdiocese, and in, Dominic, Jhee and Nicholas as the Church commissions them as Readers or Lectors. We do I am sure experience a profound sense of gratitude to God that he continues to call men to the ordained ministry and to the courageous and faith-filled men who continue to respond, as Tung, Dominic, Jhee and Nicholas are this evening.

Tonight of course we are not celebrating an ordination but rather a formal rite of institution. We know, however, that for these four young men tonight is a significant step towards ordination, firstly as deacons and then as priests. A journey of faith and discernment has brought the four of you here tonight. Tomorrow that journey will continue. You will continue to have moments of deep serenity and of great excitement as this journey unfolds and you will, equally, have moments of doubt, or challenge and even of suffering. At all times, but especially during moments of difficulty, remember what this journey is all about. You have set out, and are continuing, on the path of discipleship. Like the one you follow, you will have to take up your cross with courage, with faith and with hope. You are following in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd and he is the one who lays down his life for his sheep.

This of course is what tonight's gospel says in a different way. You have been called, or at least are discerning the call, to leave father and mother and sister and brother and houses and land for the sake of Jesus and his gospel. The Lord promises a great reward, but it is a reward that cannot be measured in terms of money, or worldly success, or the acclaim of admirers. It is a reward that will be measured by the inner peace the Lord promises his disciples, a peace the world cannot give, and a peace that exists somewhere deep in your spirit even when you find yourself in turmoil, difficulty or suffering. It is the peace that comes to those who have found the treasure hidden in



the field and have given everything else away in order to possess that treasure. And of course the treasure is Christ.

It is Christ, indeed, who is the unifying link between the ministry of Acolyte and the ministry of Lector. As I was reflecting on these two ministries the words of Moses from the Book of Deuteronomy came to my mind: what other nation is there that has its gods so near to them as our God is near to us. Moses of course could never have realised the depth of the truth behind the inspired words he spoke. It is only in the mystery of the incarnation, in the mystery of the Word made flesh, that the truth is finally and fully revealed. The mighty God, the mysterious other, the incomprehensible source and origin of all that is, becomes one of us so that we might hear his voice, see his face, and learn to love him. As Cardinal Newman would remind us, his heart speaks to our heart and we, from the depth of our heart, can enter into communion with him.

It will be the task and the privilege of our newly-instituted Lectors to give voice to the one who is the Word of God. Through you, Jhee, Dominic and Nicholas, God's people, now in a formally commissioned way, will have their hearts touched by the consoling, and hope-filled, and challenging word of God. It is true that you have already become used to proclaiming the Word of God - but now you will do so in the name of the Church. And so you must make sure that it is God's word, and not your own, that you proclaim. You will be guided by your studies, by your prayer, by your openness to the ways in which God speaks to you, and of course by the wisdom and experience of the Church. Tonight is all about the Lord who chooses to live and work in and through his Church. What this means of course is that unless your words give expression to the daily reality of your life, you will not be the fruitful ministers of the gospel that God needs you to be. You must, as you will hear again if you are ordained as deacons, model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.

If Lectors are called to give voice to the Word Of God, Acolytes are called to give flesh to the Word made flesh. Through your formal installation tonight, Tung, you become a minister at the altar. The way in which you conduct yourself at the altar will bear witness to what you really believe - about yourself, about your vocation, about the Church and, in all that, about the Eucharist which is the heart of the Church's life. The words of Saint Augustine, which you have often heard me refer to before, now must become an urgent priority for you. You must become what you receive - you must become what you believe. Your "amen" when you receive communion today, and every day, must be an expression of your willingness to become, in the Lord, one who gives himself, body and soul, for the good of God's people. This is what Jesus himself did at the Last Supper and on the cross. It is now, more than ever before, the great challenge which lies ahead of you.

Because of all of this I would encourage you, as Lectors and Acolytes, to take Mary, the Mother of the Lord, as both your model and your helper. Because, as the Angelus prayer recalls for us,



she said yes to the Lord, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. To the extent that you also say yes to the Lord the Word, through your lives and ministry, will become flesh in the lives of God's people. They will be able to hear the Lord's heart calling to their hearts, and they will, we pray, know how to give their yes to him as well.

So thank you for your willingness to listen and to respond, a willingness which is crystallised in tonight's celebration. And may God, who has begun the good work in you, bring it to fulfilment.