



Ordination to the Diaconate - Homily
Rodrigo Da Coste Ponte, Matthew Hodges, Giovanni Raffaele and David Ramirez

By the Most Rev Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

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Ordinarily, the ordination this evening would have been celebrated by the Archbishop. However, he is in Italy attending a gathering of Salesian bishops in Turin so, happily, he has an auxiliary bishop who is delighted to have the privilege to celebrate this wonderful moment.

It is interesting to note that the order of deacons is the first to be received by these young men as they proceed one day to the order of priests but in history, the deacons were the first of the Holy Orders to come into existence: the priests and bishops followed later as the Apostolic age was coming to an end.

The order of deacons is the oldest and, even though first instituted to assist with the care of the poor and vulnerable, the earliest deacons were quickly pressed into the service of preaching and assisting the mission of the Apostles themselves.

This evening, we are to witness four young men giving their public testimony that they aspire to be the best possible servants of Christ and His people. They will offer the Prayer of the Church each day in praise of God and for their brothers and sisters in the Church.

They will seek to serve God's people, especially the poorest, whenever and wherever the Lord leads them. They will preach the Good News through their simplicity and humility and care for others.

In short, they will show that the love of Christ dwells in their hearts.

This is a wonderful thing to aim for and it is a terrible thing.

Jesus, however, shows us that, reassuringly, He walks beside us, lending us His help so that we may attain the love that inspires us and to which we aspire.



We are very close to the great feast of Pentecost and, in these days ahead of us, we will be celebrating the sending of the Holy Spirit on the Church. The Holy Spirit is the gift given to each of us so that the face of Christ may be more visible in us and through the ministries of service and love confided to us by the Lord.

Rodrigo, Matthew, Giovanni and David, I hope that you feel comforted by the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit since the day of your baptism and that, as you receive the Holy Spirit in this ordination, you will always aspire to be the best ministers of charity because you will know the justifying power of the Spirit in your new ministry. He will make up what is lacking in you; He will surprise you by His goodness to you and His trust in you.

The last things that Jesus did before He physically left the disciples included the transmission of responsibilities to the Apostles. The Gospel we have just heard spoke of the transmission to Peter of his special mission which came down to him, realising that he, who had thought of himself being superior to others in his zeal, was called to become superior in loving.

You can hear the hesitation as Peter responded to the three questions posed by Jesus: Do you love me? What is going on in this exchange is that Jesus and Peter are talking about two different kinds of love. Peter knows of what he is capable and he knows what is being asked of him. To the first two questions, he answers honestly that he is attached to Jesus, whereas he is being asked can he love with the love of Christ. Peter's love is the limited kind, focused on himself, not sacrificial or outward looking.

Finally Jesus asks: Are you attached to me? Peter is shocked for it appears that Jesus now questions even his attachment.

Of course, what Jesus sees in Peter is his capacity to true charity. But the challenge to Peter is will he exercise this love by forgetting himself and love and feed the lambs and the sheep.

When speaking to the new cardinals recently, Pope Francis reminded them that all presiding in the Church flows from charity. He used the great hymn to charity of St Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians. It is a wonderful summary of Christ's love it applies to deacons, priests and bishops, and to married couples and families; in fact, to all the baptised.

We are all called to love which is kind and patient. Pope Francis reminds us that, the greater the responsibility in serving the Church, the more our hearts need to expand according to the measure of the heart of Christ. Patience means to be able to love without limits and to be faithful in each situation we find ourselves and to ready to offer gestures that reassure others.

Kindness, he says, means having the firm and persevering intention to always will the good of others, even those unfriendly to us. It is good to read the entire text of his reflection. The patient and kind minister of the Gospel, I believe, is the one most needed today.



I hope and will pray that our deacons will not be afraid to aspire to the love of Christ, even when it will seem so far above us and terrible in what it calls from us. Peter proved to be faithful as he had never been before. He exercised the love for the lambs and sheep with the assistance of the Spirit that made him strong. His call from Christ was followed with grace that never was found to be lacking. May you four grow in faith and trust in the Lord