



**Ordination to the Diaconate
Liam Ryan and Matteo Verdi**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Friday 7 December, 2018

Matteo and Liam met with me on Tuesday and we talked about the way that Jesus Christ has been faithful to them since they began walking in their communities. I heard of their deep gratitude to God who has called them to become Christian and to follow the path to life. They expressed their amazement that God should have revealed to them that they have been chosen to serve his people through Holy Orders, beginning with the Diaconate.

Like each of us here this evening, Matteo and Liam came to a special moment when they had to choose the path to follow: the path of the Good Shepherd or another path. This choice is not easy. It takes time and patience to discern the true call of Christ. So we are assembled here to celebrate the generous choice that they made, to take seriously and trustingly the path of service for the Church. It is only with faith, that anyone can place their lives into the hands of God. This gift of faith, the first gift of the Holy Spirit, is given at our Baptism.

Matteo and Liam know that they rely on the Holy Spirit to provide for them the faith and strength to live each day, their Baptismal call and the further call to service of the Church in Holy Orders. The diaconate is the foundational sacred ordination that consecrates a man to serve as Jesus himself served. Service is the foundation of ordained ministry and when this attitude of service is recognised in his ministry, that is, giving of oneself without counting the cost, then the deacon, priest and bishop most clearly acts with the spirit of Christ. This humble service is the sign of the Holy Spirit present and at work in the sacred minister.

The service offered by the deacon is to minister at the altar, to proclaim the Gospel, prepare the Sacrifice and distribute the Body and Blood of the Lord to the faithful. In addition, the deacon serves the Church by preaching and teaching the Good News of Jesus Christ, by presiding over public prayer, celebrating Baptisms and marriages, responding to the calls to take Viaticum to the dying and conduct funerals.

These are the ways the deacon becomes an assurance for the people that God is near and loves them. Assurance is needed today as it has always been needed.



Eve, the mother of humanity, was brought to a moment of decision. However her faith in God's goodness proved to be frail. She chose independence and total autonomy over the relationship with God. She and Adam decided to walk on another path. They discovered it was a path of curses and they experienced the feeling of rejection, of being alone and abandoned.

Yet in this sorry tale there was a glimmer of hope provided by their loving God. A way of hope was opened up. Although they felt the punishment for their turning away from God, Eve and Adam discovered that the punishment was never absolute. There is always a possible future. A Son of Eve would eventually crush the head of the Evil One, while himself paying the price.

The ordination this evening, on the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God, provides for us the opportunity to recall the first time the Good News was proclaimed. It was given so soon after the Fall of the first man and woman, and this surely is the great sign to us of the loving mercy of our God. In the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, we acknowledge that the Virgin Mary, a descendant of the Woman Eve, is the one in whom God has fully restored his friendship prior to the establishment of salvation in her Son, the man-God.

Let the sign of this ordination be another encouragement for us. Another choice is possible for each of us. It is possible to resume our walk on the path of life, because this is the desire of God and He will provide all that we need to trust in Him again, and believe in his goodness and love for us, and the strength to begin walking along his way. We can leave behind the path of curses - We can learn to love and forgive, and learn of the power of humble service that can create us anew.