



**Diaconate Ordination of Simeon San, Israel Quirit, Garner Vergara Jr,
Grant Gorddard, Stephen Gorddard and Jeffrey Casabuena – Homily**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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We began our celebration this evening with the beautiful hymn *Christ be our Light*. It is a hymn, I think, which gives expression to our faith that Jesus really is for us the Way, the Truth and the Life. It is a wonderful hymn, not only because of its beautiful and stirring melody, but much more because of the beauty of the words we pray each time we sing it. As I begin my reflection this evening, I want to suggest to our six young candidates for ordination that the sentiments expressed in the hymn might become a kind of motto for your lives from tonight onwards. Let Christ be your light. Let Him shine in your hearts; let Him shine in your darkness; and, from tonight, let Him use you in such a way that He shines in His Church, the Church to which you are committing yourselves tonight, the Church which is His body, the Church which He loves.

Just recently, as we are probably all well aware, the Synod on the Family concluded in Rome. In an address Pope Francis gave during a prayer vigil the evening before the Synod began, he acknowledged that the Synod would be dealing with some difficult and urgent issues. He recognised that some people might be uneasy and even afraid of what might emerge in the Synod discussions. He went on, however, to remind his listeners that it was not a new experience for the Church to face such moments of tension or to be confronted with such challenging questions. He remarked that our history as a Church was full of moments when the Church faced, and overcame, challenges at least as great as those we face today. And then he asked the crucial question. How did the Church manage to deal successfully and faithfully with these tensions and problems in the past? "The secret," he said, "lies in a gaze: and it is a gift that we must implore with our prayer. Because, if we truly intend to walk among contemporary challenges, the decisive condition is to maintain a fixed gaze on Jesus Christ - to pause in contemplation and in adoration of His Face."

In these simple words, the Pope has captured the very essence of our faith. For this very reason, I want to say to Grant, Stephen, Israel, Simeon, Jeffrey and Garner, that this must be also the very essence of your lives as ordained ministers in our Church. I have said often, and I want to repeat it again tonight, that we, as the Church, have only one gift to offer: Jesus Christ. Each of you, as deacons, also will have only one gift, the same gift, to offer – the gift of Jesus. You will do this through your liturgical ministry, especially through your preaching and your celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, through your witnessing of marriage, through your presiding at funerals, and in all the other ways in which you lead us in prayer. In your preaching,



make sure that it is Jesus you proclaim. Be like St John the Baptist who is pictured in the Gospels as a man who points away from himself and towards Jesus: “Look,” he says, “there is the Lamb of God”. When people leave the church after a Mass at which you preach, or after a baptism you have performed, or after a funeral you have led, your goal must be that they do not leave saying, “Wasn’t that deacon wonderful”, but saying, rather, at least in their hearts if not out loud, “Now we know and understand Jesus a little better. Now we know how much He loves us. Now we know what he is calling us to”.

Another way of saying this is to say that from tonight onwards, in a way that has perhaps never been as true before, an encounter with you must really be an encounter with the Lord. And this must be the case not just when you are involved in your liturgical ministry, but always, and in every situation. Tonight, you are not simply taking on a new job in the Church: you are becoming, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, a new person, a new reality, in the Church. Your specific vocation as a deacon is to be a living and effective sign that Jesus is still among us as the one who comes not to be served but to serve. The love, the passion and the humility which prompted Jesus to get down on His hands and knees to wash the feet of His disciples must now be incarnated in you. Always remember that, as a deacon, you are called to serve others, not to have them serve you. And remember, too, that when you are later ordained as priests, the charism of *diakonia*, of service, will not be superseded but only deepened. In this sense, you will always be deacons!

This calls for profound humility. It also calls for heroic self-sacrifice. And this brings us back to where we began. As Pope Francis says, “the decisive condition is to maintain a fixed gaze on Jesus Christ – to pause in contemplation and in adoration of His face”. To the extent that you are men of prayer - and not just men who say prayers – to that extent, your diaconal life and ministry will be fruitful. After all, you are being ordained as ministers of Jesus Christ tonight. It is He you are called to bring to others – and how can you do that if you do not know really who He is, and if you are not growing in your love for Him and your commitment to Him?

This, then, is our prayer for you tonight: that you really do let Christ be your light; that you let Him shine more and more brightly in your hearts; that you let Him shine in your moments of darkness; and that you live, and pray and serve God’s people in such a way that Christ shines in His Church. As St John the Baptist once said of Jesus, “He must grow greater and I must grow smaller”. May that be the fruit of your lives as ordained ministers in the Church, a life that begins tonight with your ordination as deacons – and may God who has begun this good work in you bring it to fulfilment.