



**Ordination to the Diaconate
Andres Felipe Fernandez**

Homily

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

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Thursday 18 August, 2022**

The plan of God is mysterious and requires the gift of the Holy Spirit for any of us to understand even a small part of it. Felipe finds himself in St Mary's Cathedral, in Perth, Western Australia, this evening, about to be ordained to the Holy Order of Deacon. I am sure that this evening and at a number of moments during his seminary formation and in those missionary experiences, he has pondered on the plan of God for him.

The Holy Spirit prompted him to consider the vocation to priesthood, and eventually to stand and offer himself to the formation and scrutiny of a community of brothers and sisters in Colombia, and then the Spirit prompted him to courageously offer himself to be sent anywhere in the world to serve those who are themselves trying to know the plan of God for themselves.

Yesterday, when he and I meet, I was impressed by the experiences he shared with me and how already he has sought to be at the service of many people as they look for the risen Christ acting in their lives. He is indebted to the many brothers and sisters who have assisted him to recognise the presence of Christ in the events of his life. This discernment provides him with the words of hope and encouragement for the encounters he will have as a deacon with the people who are fellow seekers of Good News.

The diaconate has been marvelously provided to us. It is not an accident that the first of the Holy Orders is essentially the call to and gifting of the man to be a servant for the people. It is providential. Service as exemplified by Jesus is the cornerstone of the Orders of priesthood and episcopacy. There will be many lessons to be learnt in this time of diaconal ministry on the value and necessity of patient and loving service. Felipe, let the Spirit guide you to those moments, welcome or unwelcome, and believe that you will understand even more deeply the love of the Father for his people and for you.

The Father does not want the sinner to die but to have life. The Prophet Ezekiel discerned this in prayer and by looking into the history of his people.



Felipe, you are to be from today an official representative of the community of Christ's faithful. People will be looking to you to be a living reminder of the Word that heals and transforms. You will be a sacrament for others whenever you teach through your actions and words. The Spirit chooses you to be an instrument of cohesion, one who, in your own person, works at becoming what you are meant to be, a Christian, and a sign of the possibility of conversion to others.

The Gospel we heard this evening reminded us of the extraordinary relationship of Christ to the Church in the image of marriage. The striking thing in the parable is the passionate desire of the Father to call both the good and the bad to the wedding feast. When the original invitees refused, the Father sent servants out, through the walls of the town to the country, to the poor and despised with the invitation to join the feast. This broke conventions and household codes.

The parable speaks of the plan of God, that we be a people who look beyond ourselves and our needs, so that we can see the suffering of so many, and invite and assist them to the life of Christ ministered in communities of disciples of the Lord.

The deacon, in a special way, is to be a servant who goes out, through the walls of convention or habit or security to the wide fields of the world to bring Christ to the people. The deacon serves both the people of the Church and reaches out to the people of the world.

The service for the Church will be through your service at the Eucharist, the celebration of public prayer, administering Baptism, assisting and blessing Marriages, bringing Viaticum to the dying and conducting funerals. Your service to the people beyond the walls of our parishes and communities will be by being a sacrament or sign to them and in your careful proclamation of the Good News, and in your charity.