



**Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians
Ordination to the Diaconate – Jupiter Bin Justin, Gionata Pagani & Marco Ferraioli**

Homily

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

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Thursday 23 May, 2024**

We arrive this evening at the Vigil of the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians. This is very special to the Church in Australia.

At the first Provincial Synod of Australia that was convened by Archbishop Polding of Sydney in 1844, Mary the Mother of God, was chosen as the Patroness of Australasia. Other dioceses were being created at that time by the Holy See and bishops appointed to them, with our own diocese of Perth coming into existence in 1845.

The decision to choose Our Lady Help of Christians was, I am sure, in response to the deep concern the bishops had at the time about the great difficulties that faced Catholics in each colony. They often felt like second class citizens and the priests had to fight for the same consideration as was given to the Anglican and Protestant clergy for their pastoral work, especially in the prisons. The governors had some discretion, but many chose to overlook the needs of Catholics.

The title, Help of Christians, refers to the great victory of the Venetians and the allied navy at Lepanto, in defence of the Christian settlement on Cyprus. This was the first European naval victory over the Ottoman Turks . The prayers asked for by Pope Pius V for the powerful intercession to Mary were seen to be answered. So the title, "Help of Christians", was added to the many others that have been given to the Mother of God.

The early bishops of Australia believed that Mary would help the Catholics of their times and into the future, as those new dioceses, local churches, began to be created. They also believed that Mary could be a great example to the families and children especially of how to live with faith and with the Spirit of Jesus.

The Word we have been given this evening has pointed to the wisdom of the ideal woman. St John Paul II once wrote: "Far from being an unattainable model, she is a concrete image born



from the experience of women of great value". This being so, it is very easy for us to relate this section from Proverbs to Mary, the Mother of Christ.

The Gospel told us about the total commitment of Mary to her calling. She is blessed because of her faith. St Columbanus once wrote: Wisdom is the door to faith. Mary is the great model of faith and teaches us that the pathway to faith is by the gift of wisdom. She magnifies the Lord, in the sense that she gives all the glory to God, for what is about to happen for her and for humanity, through her act of humility, which provided the possibility for God to show his immense love and mercy to us.

What a wonderful occasion for us to gather! We reflect on the openness of Mary, her humility and her listening to the Holy Spirit calling her.

We are here to accompany and support Jupiter, Gionata and Marco as they humbly approach for ordination to the diaconate. They have responded to the best of their abilities, human and spiritual, to an invitation to follow the call of the Lord. The way has not always been easy. There will have been challenges and disappointments. These would have been countered by joys and deep happiness as their vocation was affirmed by the experiences they have had along the way, especially when on mission here and in other places.

Very soon, by the laying on of hands and the Ordination prayer, they will be called to serve alongside Jesus, and for Jesus, who is to be found in the least of their brothers and sisters. They will receive the sacrament of Holy Orders to ministry in conjunction with the bishops and priests. They will each be asked to take up the threefold deacon's ministry: the ministry of the liturgy, the ministry of the Word and the ministry of charity.

Jupiter, Gionata and Marco: you are about to become deacons of the Archdiocese of Perth. More than ever before, this will be the church which will be your home. You will be missionaries wherever you are called to go by the Archbishop of Perth, either here or in other places. Please God, you will be found worthy to be called to the priesthood, and likewise you will be sent to those who will need your pastoral leadership, either here in this archdiocese or in other lands.

The diaconal ministry in Perth will give you the opportunity to deepen your knowledge of the people of this church, and to deepen your love for them. It will be in them that you will witness the power of the Spirit of Jesus to transform and give new life, if you put yourselves at his service. Their faith and needs will become a priority for you, and Jesus Christ will be assisted to come to them because his spirit will be seen in you.



In this way you too will magnify the Lord. You will be the lens through which the people you serve will see Jesus more clearly: through your humility, compassion and charity.

May the Lord continue to guide you as you learn from your pastoral ministry, and help you see what has begun in you being fulfilled.