



Bishop Gary Gordon

ORDAINED TO SERVE

Ordination to the Diaconate

St. Andrew's Cathedral

July 28, 2018

I want to leave a few words, John, Michael, Dion, and Philip; Heather and Cynthia, Kerry and Marie, and your families, and all who are gathered here, about this grace-filled, historical moment in the life of our Church in the Diocese of Victoria. This is a first. We know that firsts, pioneers, are wont to make mistakes, and sometimes get a little lost, and perhaps even get in to some trouble. It's all OK.

The Word of God today in the beautiful Second Reading of the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of the ministry of Jesus Christ as the bringer of healing, and of peace, and to liberate all who are oppressed by sin and the devil. And that is a ministry of the whole Church, and in particular, the ministry of service to the Church and to all people. To bring peace. The word peace is mentioned in the Gospel, where Jesus says, *Wherever you go, whatever house you go to, bring peace. Bring the peace of Christ.* And so one of the great hallmarks

of this particular ministry of deacon is to be a wonderful instrument of peace, a witness of peace.

Now, this is the peace of Christ. This is not the peace of a détente, or some kind of negotiated deal. This is the peace of Jesus Christ. It's a peace that brings healing, because it is a peace that is meant most particularly for the poor and the vulnerable—the ones in our society who cannot protect themselves, whose lives are on the very edge and fringe of existence. The ones in our society who are the poorest and the most vulnerable, for this the Diaconate was instituted by the Church, by the Apostles, to bring peace to the widows and the orphans: those most destitute at the time of the Apostles. To bring peace to those who cannot insulate themselves from the tragedies of life. To bring peace to those who have no protection because they sleep rough, as we would say, on the streets. This is the peace of which the Diaconate is most profoundly invited to be



a sacrament. St. John Paul II said that the Diaconate, the deacon, is the sacrament of Christ's service to the poor. It is the sacrament of the Church's constant presence to the poor and to the needy.

Now: I have great expectations! And as you have gotten to know me a little bit over the last four years, I have some pretty out-there ideas! You just ask the staff at the Pastoral Centre! But let me contain myself, at least now, with just a few of these ideas, and my hopes for this wonderful ministry in the life of our Church.

You have received from God many talents, and many gifts, which you have used in the service of your families, and have used in the service of the community, and of the Church. Many, many gifts. Most precious, you have the gift of your wives and your families. This is the gift that you bring to ministry. Your closest collaborator in this ministry of service of Christ to the poor is going to be your wife. She is your collaborator. This is the one who is going to say, *How are you doing? How are those poor people doing? Have you been able to advocate for them? Have you been able to create opportunities of justice and peace and mercy?* So, wives, you have a very important job to do. Your job is with a fairly gentle toe and foot: *Get going!* I'm so grateful for that support.

What is our Church in need of, more than anything else, at this particular time, in this particular age, in this particular country, Canada, and this particular Diocese? Well, let me use an example from the year 258. Way back.

In 258, in the city of Rome, Valerian the Emperor had just started a new persecution of Christians. The reason was they had been declared as enemies of the human race. This is what Valerian and the

Senate of Rome said, that Christians are enemies of the human race. And, well, the

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best thing to do, is let's round up all the clergy, especially the Bishop of Rome, and the deacons, and we'll execute them. So in 258, Pope Sixtus II lost his head, along with the other seven deacons of Rome, except for one: Lawrence.

Lawrence had the marvellous thought that before the Christians were rounded up and martyred in Rome, they should try to help the poor, in the image of Christ. And so he collected from those who had property or wealth, and distributed it to the poor. Well, the Emperor heard about this, and he thought, “Oh boy! Those Christians are rich! I've got to get my hands on all that money, on all that property. I need it!”

And so Emperor Valerian called Deacon Lawrence in, who hadn't quite met his end yet, and said, “Lawrence, we're going to do a deal! You bring me all the wealth of the Church, and I will spare your life, and I'll let you go on being a deacon.”

So Lawrence—he's a smart guy—says, “We've got a deal, Valerian. Give me three days.” Off Lawrence goes, and in three days, he gathers up the total wealth of the Church. They set a meeting place in Rome.



Lawrence sends a message and says, “Valerian, come on over, I’ve got all the wealth of the Church, and it’s piled up in the Square. Come on over and get it.”

When Valerian got there, Lawrence presented to the Emperor of the Roman Empire the lame, the destitute, the prisoners, the slaves, and the poorest of the poor in the City of Rome, and said, “This is the wealth of the Christian Church.” Well, that didn’t go over too well, and Lawrence was also martyred. I hope that doesn’t happen to you! This is not my plan, it is not my hope, and it is not my expectation.

But my expectation is this: my hope is that with this Order of Deacon, which is to serve the poor, that you will open the doors of our churches to the poorest and the most marginal in this city and in this Diocese. My hope is that you will open the hearts of the faithful to the poorest and the most marginal so that our hearts become homes for those who are suffering greatest. My hope, and this might be where it might be a wild idea, is that you set up your tent in a tent city, in this city. My hope is that your ministry is going to enliven our Church to become what Pope Francis has invited us to: *I want the Church to be a field hospital*.

My great hope for this Order of Deacons in our Diocese is that your ministry will open the hearts of all the faithful in our parishes, and that you will knock on the hearts of our Church to be a place of refuge, and that the whole people of God in this Diocese will be so committed to the impoverished, to the vulnerable, to the poorest, to the weakest, to the addicted, and to those who are simply excluded from society that our Church, every parish in this Diocese, will truly look like a field hospital.

That’s a big call. You’ve got your assignments, and each one of your

assignments is going to put you in close proximity to the most vulnerable in our Diocese. As ordained ministers, my hope is that you will open my heart, and their hearts, and these doors, so that we truly begin to be the field hospital that Pope Francis has invited us to be as a Church.

God bless you. I will be with you all the way. If you have any questions, don’t guess at the answers. Pick up the phone. Call. I am so pleased to be your Bishop. I am so pleased to have this great ministry of the Diaconate in our Diocese: a ministry established by service in Jesus Christ by the Church for the whole people. Just to give you an idea: there are 750,000 people in this Diocese, and at least 150,000 – 200,000 are truly, truly hurting. We’ve got a lot of work to do, brothers, and sisters, and we’re going to do it together. The service of Jesus Christ to the world will continue in our hearts, and in our lives, through our hands, and our feet.

God bless you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.





Deacon John and Heather Dawson

John is assigned to serve in the ministry of accompaniment at Holmalco First Nation, and will serve at St. Patrick's Parish in Campbell River under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Jan Grotkowski SDS.



Deacon Dion and Kerry Pomponio

Dion is assigned to serve in prison ministry at William Head Prison, assisting Chaplains John and Dana Mellis, and will serve at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Langford under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Paul Szczur SDS.



Deacon Michael Watkins and Cynthia Bouchard

Michael is assigned to serve in hospital ministry and care of the sick, assisting Fr. Ian Stuart, Hospital Chaplain, and will serve at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Victoria under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Alfredo Monacelli.



Deacon Philip and Marie Yuson

Philip is assigned to serve in the ministry of the Apostleship of Sea in collaboration with Bishop Gary Gordon, and will serve at St. Andrew's Cathedral under the pastoral leadership of Fr. John Laszczyk.

