

*Bishop Paul Bird's Homily for the
Ordinations to the Diaconate of
Matthew Restall & William Lowry*

We come now to the ceremony in which Matt and Bill will be ordained as deacons. I invite you all to consider the mission they will have within the community of the Church.

As deacons, they will assist the bishops and priests in their ministries of service. They will be ministers of the word, of the altar, and of charity. As ministers of the altar, they will proclaim the Gospel and give the Lord's body and blood to the community of believers. It will also be their duty to bring God's word to believer and unbeliever alike, to preside over public prayer, to baptise, to assist at marriages and bless them, to give viaticum to the dying and to lead the rites of funerals. They will perform works of charity in the name of the Church. From the way they go about these duties, may you recognise them as disciples of Jesus.

Matt and Bill, you are now to be ordained as deacons. You are being called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who came to do the will of the heavenly Father. Do the will of God generously. Serve God and the people with all our heart.

Like those the apostles chose for works of charity, you should be people of good reputation, filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit. Show that you are above every suspicion of blame, true ministers of Christ and of God's mysteries, planted firmly in the soil of faith. Never turn away from the hope that the Gospel offers. Now you must not only listen to God's word but also preach it. Show in action what you proclaim in your words.

You will fulfil your mission as members of our diocesan community. May you serve with profound respect for the people of the diocese. Wherever you may be, may you cherish your local community and do all you can to build up the community, in faith and hope and love.

A few minutes ago we heard from the second letter to Timothy. The text began, "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands". In the ceremony this evening, I will lay my hands on you to ordain you as deacons and we will pray that you will be filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to serve faithfully. As the days unfold, may you fan that gift into a flame so that you will be able to bear witness to Christ with confidence. Persevere in your service in good times and in bad. Like the apostles, be ready to suffer for the gospel, relying on the power of God. Like the apostles, don't be ashamed of the message of Christ, but rather be heralds of the gospel and teachers of faith. Proclaim the good news in simple words. Proclaim the good news also in a simple way of life.

In the gospel text for this Mass, we heard the lesson that Jesus gave for anyone called to a leadership role in the Church. The call to lead is not a call to dominate. Rather, it is a call to serve and indeed to lay down one's life in service , just as Jesus himself came to serve and lay down his for others.

May your ordination as deacons this evening deepen your sense of service. May you live as true servants of your brothers and sisters. Then when your journey on earth comes to an end and you meet the Lord face to face, may you hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord." May God be with you in all you do.

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