

Thanksgiving Speech: Ordination to the Diaconate

William Lowry

10-12-21

The great Lord Reading once offered the following advice on presenting a speech, “Always be shorter than anyone dared to hope,” dear friends I wish to give you all a reason for Christian hope this evening so I aim to be brief. This is no easy feat however with the many, many people that are deserving of our sincerest thanks and admiration.

I’ll begin first by of course acknowledging God in the persons of the Trinity, who have guided us and formed us, choosing these frail vessels, these jars of clay to make clear to us that this overwhelming power, this grace comes from God and not from us.

I would like then to thank the people of God, each and every one of you here this evening online or in person, each one of you has been a moment of grace, whether great or small. The gentle hand of providence teaching, forming and guiding Matthew and I in our journey towards this moment.

Deacon Matthew would like to particularly thank this evening a number people who have been significant moments of grace through his life. Firstly, his parents Phyllis and Emidio for their love, care and support and for passing on the faith, his sisters Henrietta our wonderful organist this evening, and Josie who sung beautifully in our choir– and their husband’s Joe Righetti and Ben Franklin. Matthew also has a twin brother, Chris who he is very grateful to have grown beside and has been a best friend to Matthew all his life. Matthew would also like to expressly thank a number of priests for their witness and example. Fr Frank Buhagiar, who vested Matthew

this evening, was his Parish Priest for most of his upbringing at St Andrew's Parish Werribee. Fr Frank also celebrated his golden jubilee last weekend so we thank you Fr Frank for your service. Matthew would like to thank also Frs Gregory Pritchard, David Cartwright, Mark Withoos and Nick Pearce who were all heavily involved in the *Guild of St Stephen* which was instrumental in providing Matthew peer support in the faith and a means to be actively involved in the life of the Church. The late Fr Denis Ward who offered spiritual direction in his high school years and Fr Anthony Bernal his current spiritual director.

Matthew would also like to thank his former colleges at the Thomas More Centre and those at the office of Senator John Madigan, particularly Pat Bourne and the late John Madigan himself whose family kindly join us this evening, you are warmly welcomed. Finally Matthew would like to thank those pastors and parishes that have been part of his development and formation. Particularly the parishioners of St Andrew's Werribee where Matthew grew up, and those parishes in which he spent time in the seminary, Holy Family Parish North-East Mallee with Frs Matthew Thomas and James Kerr, St Paul VI Parish Wimmera Mallee with then Parish Priest Fr Peter Hudson, St Mary's Colac Parish and district with Fr Michael O'Toole and the Parishes of St Columba's Ballarat North and Our Lady Help of Christians Wendouree and district with Fr Marcello Colasante.

I would also like to personally thank my parents, Tracey and Grant, who have always supported me and taught me what generosity and compassion look like. My sister Elsie who is also in the choir, she is the best formator I could ask for. Thank you also to Deacon Jackson Saunders my good friend and rival from Bendigo for vesting me this evening. I would also like to thank those who have inspired in me the love of God and his people through my life. Fr Michael Gallagher who is here this evening, thank you for answering my ridiculous questions as a young 17 year old on World

Youth Day, Frs James Kerr and Justin Driscoll, the Sisters and residents of Nazareth House, the ACU Chaplaincy team and Tanya Kehoe and Cathedral Parish of Ballarat, Fr Denis Cramer and the late Fr Tony Hally, thank you for helping me discern and answer God's invitation to serve. Thanks also to Frs Richard Rosse, Cao Nguyen, Michael Smith, Pascal Corby, Gerry Geringher and Robin Koning who has provided me with spiritual support over the years.

I would also like to thank the wonderful pastors and parishes I have been privileged to serve in and with. The parishes of St Patrick's Camperdown/St Joseph's Timboon and district and Fr Neville Stanislaus, Star of the Sea Parish South West Coast Parish and Frs John Fitzgerald and John Corrigan, Sacred Heart Parish and district Mildura and St Joseph's Ouyen and Fr Michael McKinnon, who really helped me develop a pastoral identity and love of people, as well as Frs James Kerr and Matt Thomas, St Paul VI Parish and district, Mons Glynn Murphy and Fr Jim McKay. It has been through the service of the people of God that I have grown in the knowledge of my vocation.

We would also like to extend our sincere thanks to Bishop Paul Bird who ordained Matthew and I this evening. Both Matthew and I have truly appreciate Bishop Paul's generosity of spirit, welcoming both of us most graciously into the Diocese of Ballarat, both beginning our studies for the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Bishop Paul has been incredibly supportive of us in our seminary journey and we are truly grateful. This generosity of spirit also extends to Bishop Peter Connors and the presbyterate and people of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat. Both of us have felt incredibly affirmed and supported by the generous priests of this diocese, building us up and modelling for us a pastors heart, so truly heartfelt thanks extends also to them.

To the staff of Corpus Christi College and Catholic Theological College our thanks is also given. Fr Dennis Stanley the Rector of Corpus Christi College, has always been a wise and discerning guide for Matt and I in our vocation journey providing for us a real example of servant leadership, for that we are grateful. Fr Edward Moloney also, former first year formator and soon to be administrator of the Cathedral. Fr Ed has been a constant support for Matthew and Bill in our seminary formation, falling under suspicion of 'poaching' us for the Diocese from Melbourne, Fr Ed has helped us immensely in knowing, understanding and loving the people of this great diocese, he is a generous pastor and wonderful person and we wish him every blessing for his new appointment. Thanks also to Frs Jake Mudge and Brian Nichols as well as Sr Frances Baker our academic dean and Maria O'Donnell my formator. A big thanks also to our brother Deacons and Colin Nunes our Eastern representative over here this evening. Thank you also to our brothers in the seminary, thank you for your friendship and your generous yes to God's invitation to serve.

Finally I would like to conclude as your hope for a short speech has already been dashed by thanking those who have helped prepare the liturgy and have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this occasion possible. Thank you to Julie Boyd and the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, Djurdja Klaric executive assistance to Bishop Paul, Fr Kevin Moloney Vicar General of the Diocese, Fr Justin Driscoll Administrator of the Cathedral and to Fr Gary Jones the Master of Ceremonies this evening. Thanks also to Vincent Sully our conductor and to the wonderful choir, our altar servers from Corpus Christi College, Tanya Kehoe the reader this evening and Sr Carmel Setford rsm who provided the acknowledgment of country. To the sacristans, ushers, covid marshals, flower arrangers, cleaners and everyone in between you are deserving of our deepest thanks and admiration. A big thanks also to those who provided the food and catering and set up for our evening supper also, which be available over in St Patrick's Hall at the conclusion of Mass.

I will conclude by asking something of each of you. Just as Deacon Matthew and I were called by name this evening as you have all seen, so to each of us were called by name at our baptism. Each of have been called uniquely to the common task of serving the Gospel. So please as you continue out of this place into the business of Christmas time, spend some time of reflection on this gift of ministry and what God is asking of you. And please pray for us in our new ministry of service. Thank you.