

CANDIDACY MASS OF DEACONS

Today's feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – or as the Eastern Church calls it 'The Entry of the Most Holy God-Bearer into the Temple' - is rich in meaning for us. It's a moment in salvation history that we learn about not from the Bible but from Tradition, when in the Jewish custom, Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, dedicated their first-born daughter to the Lord's service in thanksgiving for her birth. There in the Temple, Mary would have been educated in the Scriptures and the Word of God. Free from Original Sin from her conception, truly a Temple of the Holy Spirit, the God-bearer would have imbibed divine teaching with purity and eagerness, offering her heart and her life to God, and so preparing herself to hear that message of the Angel inviting her to become the Mother of the Lord. It's this total dedication of Mary to the Lord's service that we recall today, a symbol of the Church's own diaconia and, indeed, of our own calling as disciples of the Lord. This is why it is important every day to make a Morning Offering. The form I was taught was this: 'O Jesus, through the most pure Heart of Mary, I offer you all the prayers, the works, the sufferings and joys of this day, for all the intentions of your Divine Heart in the Holy Mass.' Every day and every moment, like Mary, we dedicate to serving, not self, but God.

Gary, Hugh, Craig and Peter, today we're very happy to admit you to candidacy for the Permanent Diaconate, and we pray for you, your wives and your families. As with Mary's Presentation in the Temple, the Holy Spirit has brought you into the Lord's Presence here in our Cathedral in order that you might dedicate yourselves in a special way to His service. Candidacy is an important step on the road of your vocation and its discernment. A deacon, diakonos, a servant of the Lord and his Church, as the first grade in Holy Order, is ordained to be an Icon of Christ the Servant, as a Minister of the Word, a Minister of the Altar and a Minister of Charity. In our own cultural context, these three tasks have to serve the new evangelisation the Church calls us to, with its two-way movement, ad intra and ad extra reaching in and reaching out: reaching in to deepen our own faith in Christ and our love for the Church and her teaching, through prayer and study of the Gospels, the Catechism, the Creed; and reaching out to others, to offer them the Good News of salvation, especially those who have been baptised but who don't practice their faith. This work of new evangelisation, will surely be central to your mission in the years ahead. Indeed, as the bishop, I want to invite everyone in this Year of Faith to deepen their faith, to sink their roots deeply into the love of Jesus, to become more deeply conscious of our Catholic distinctiveness, and to dip into our Catholic Tradition as a toolbox from which we can draw things both old and new, in order to be more effective evangelisers of the secular culture in which we live.

HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE; THE LORD IS WITH YOU! Congratulations to our candidates: thank you for your generosity! Thank you Fr. Peter for all your work with our deacons. We ask the Lord's blessing on you all today. In this Mass, in which Jesus lays down his life for us, I invite you to lay down your lives to return His love. May the Blessed Virgin pray for you that you may be holy and humble, orthodox servants of Christ, creative and courageous deacons animated by the Holy Spirit.