

MARK LEIGHTLEY DIACONATE ORDINATION

BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I KNEW YOU; BEFORE YOU CAME TO BIRTH I CONSECRATED YOU; I APPOINTED YOU AS PROPHET TO THE NATIONS. After a long journey of life, with a sense of being called even on a vocations retreat with Fr. David Mahy when you were eight, then later as a nurse and now as a photographer, those words of the Lord to Prophet Isaiah in that 1stR, are being fulfilled today for you, Mark, as you are ordained deacon. I know this is a very happy day for you, for Sandy your wife and for your family and friends. It's also a happy day for the parish of Guernsey and for our diocese. Indeed, it's a happy day for me too as bishop, my first ordination as Bishop of Portsmouth!

In that 2ndR, in which the Apostles appointed SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTATION to assist them, we hear that a deacon is a man, ordained by the laying on of hands not to the priesthood but to service, which is always the first grade and basis of all holy order. Like a priest and a bishop, the deacon shares in his own way in Christ's three-fold ministry of sanctifying, teaching and shepherding. I'm really pleased that in the Order of Service, you have printed for us the official homily from the Pontifical, so we can all take it away and reflect on this after. Like you, most deacons will serve in parishes, serving the parish priest and serving the community, often in practical, down to earth ways. In Tradition, a deacon is associated especially at Mass with ministering the Chalice, the Precious Blood of Jesus. This symbolises perfectly your vocation: like Jesus, to lay down your flesh and blood for the service of others. For above all, a deacon is a minister of charity, and charity can mean anything from the real, personal, practical care of someone in dire need to cleaning up a mess in the parish hall.

Catholics in today's secular culture are countercultural people: we often have to run upstream against the tide. In the Gospel, Jesus prays to the Father about this confrontation between the Kingdom of God and the way of the world. He prays for us: THE WORLD HATES THEM BECAUSE THEY BELONG TO THE WORLD NO MORE THAN I BELONG TO THE WORLD. This is why Mark, it is really important, helped by Sandy and your family and friends, to be a man of deep faith. A deacon is not defined by what he does, but by who he is, by his character as a man of service who lives with a diaconal heart. So love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, spending time each day, if you can, in the transforming presence of the Lord. Love too the Divine Office, which brings the grace of the Mass to the various hours of the day. And love the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, which, as the Word of God in written form, enable us ministers to be in full communion with Jesus.

GO INTO THE WORLD; MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS said the Psalm. In this Mass, we ask the prayers of Our Lady and the Saints of Guernsey for you Mark, that you will be an instrument of the new evangelisation the Holy Spirit is calling us to. As the Church enters the 21C, each one of us needs to deepen our faith if we are to spread it to others: for you cannot give what you haven't got. So in this Mass, as we pray for Deacon Mark and for the Church on this island, let us also pray for ourselves in this Year of Faith, that we will grow in our faith, persevere in its practice, and one day merit to hear what we hope and pray the Lord will say to Mark: WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT; COME AND ENTER THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR LORD.