

**ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF REV. BEN THEOBALD**

The ordination of a priest is a proof that God really does exist. It is a proof that Christ truly is risen from the dead. It is a proof that the Holy Spirit is at work powerfully in today's world. The ordination of a priest shews that God is a Person, a Lover: he can transform a man; he can set him on fire; he can call him into a life-changing relationship. For the ordination of a priest is really about love, love that is stronger than death, a love that brings happiness, a love we must share with others.

Ben, we thank you for what you are undertaking today. We thank your mother, Brenda, your sisters and brothers, your family and friends. We thank you for generously giving your life to Christ and His Church in the Diocese of Portsmouth. We thank you for your fidelity during the years of formation at the English College Rome, and we thank the College Rector and Staff for their work. Every Christian shares in the priesthood of Christ, but by the Sacrament of Holy Order, some are set apart to act in persona Christi capitis, in the Person of Christ the Head of the Church. The essence of priesthood is service, as Jesus shewed us in the Gospel by washing his disciples' feet: I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YOU MAY COPY WHAT I HAVE DONE. That service means sharing Christ's three-fold ministry of sanctifying, teaching and shepherding. Ben, it will cost you everything, even your life. For to be a priest is to be a Victim. In Christianity, Priesthood means Victimhood.

We've just heard that beautiful 2ndR from St. Paul: I LIVE NOW, NOT WITH MY OWN LIFE BUT WITH THE LIFE OF CHRIST WHO LIVES IN ME. To be a priest today also means being a sentinel. A sentinel is a guard, someone on the lookout, a watchman keeping an eye on what's ahead for both the human and the Catholic communities. In today's exciting yet sometimes toxic secular culture, the Church is calling us to new evangelisation, which in essence means proclaiming the Person of Jesus Christ, died and risen, and inviting all to a personal-passionate friendship with him. This is why before anything else as a 21C priest you must be a man of prayer, a man who spends time every day with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, a man in love with God, who knows Jesus personally and who is able to help others pray and find their way to Him. As a man of prayer, you must also be a good teacher, faithful to the Church's Tradition, yet able to explain the meaning of what we believe in a way that captures the imagination, especially of the young and the poor. In this you will need to be truly creative and courageous.

AS THE RAIN COMES DOWN AND DOES NOT RETURN WITHOUT WATERING THE EARTH, SO THE WORD DOES NOT RETURN WITHOUT SUCCEEDING IN WHAT IT WAS SENT TO DO (1stR). Ben, in a moment, you will be ordained a priest and what from all eternity has been God's plan will be fulfilled. We pray for you today. We invoke the prayers of the Blessed Mother, St. Edmund and St. John

Vianney. We pray you that will be happy in life, that you will persevere every day in your vocation, that the grace of the Lord's resurrection will help you carry the Cross. As a priest your commitment to celibacy will remind everyone that Jesus too was celibate, that he too laid down his life for the Church, His Bride, and that His is the Way to TGLHH&F. May you shew that Way to others. And at the last, may you be found worthy to hear those thrilling words of the Lord: WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT: COME AND ENTER THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR LORD!