

DIACONATE ORDINATION: GABRIEL WILSON OSB

WHAT MAN CAN KNOW THE INTENTIONS OF GOD? WHO CAN DIVINE THE WILL OF THE LORD? Those words from the Book of Wisdom seem most appropriate today for you Brother Gabriel, as the Lord over the years with all your experiences of life, has at last brought you to find your true vocation as a monk of this community, today being ordained a deacon. As you wrote to me: 'My life is a testament that God often makes straight with cooked paths.' This is a happy day for you, but also a happy day for your friends and family, and a happy day for the monastic community here. We wish you God's love in the years ahead.

In that 2ndR, St. Paul spoke about Onesimus, a servant of Philemon, in fact a slave, who had converted to Christianity and whom Paul was sending back. In the Church, a deacon, from the Gk. diakonos, is a servant, a man ordained as a servant, and service as you know is the basis of all ministry and holy order. Like priests and bishops, deacons share in Christ's three-fold ministry of sanctifying, teaching and shepherding. The deacon in Tradition is especially associated with ministering at Mass the Chalice, the Precious Blood of Jesus, and this symbolises perfectly his vocation: that is, to be like Jesus, to sacrifice himself, to lay down his flesh and blood for the service of others. For the essence of true love is self-sacrifice. This is why deacons are appointed, as ministers of charity, and charity can mean anything that's needed, down to the most menial yet necessary tasks of all.

WHICH OF YOU, INTENDING TO BUILD A TOWER, WOULD NOT FIRST SIT DOWN AND WORK OUT THE COST? Brother Gabriel, your vocation to be a deacon is intrinsically bound up with the Lord's call for you to be a monk of this community. We know you do not undertake this vocation lightly. In today's secular culture, as Catholics, as priests and people, certainly as monks, we know that our doctrine, life and worship is quite countercultural. This is why we need to be people 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, one who lives his life with a diaconal heart. So love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; love being in his transforming presence. Love too the Divine Office; it is the heart of the monastic day and brings the grace of the Mass to its different hours. Love the life and work of the monastery, and constantly reflect with joy upon the vows you have taken of poverty, chastity and obedience.

ANYONE WHO DOES NOT CARRY HIS CROSS AND COME AFTER ME CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE says Jesus. As the Church enters ever more deeply into 21C, the Holy Spirit is calling all of us to an evangelisation new in its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression. In this work, the monastic vocation is crucial, for this land was once

evangelised by monks. But evangelisation is not just about reaching others; first and foremost it is about ourselves being evangelised. None of us can give what we haven't got. So in this Mass, on the Feast of Mary's Birthday, as we pray for the conversion of England, let us ask Mary's prayers for Brother Gabriel, for this whole community and indeed, if you would, for our Diocese of Portsmouth. In this Year of Faith, may we all grow in ardour, persevere in practice, and one day merit to hear what we hope and pray the Lord will say to Brother Gabriel: WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS; COME AND ENTER THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR LORD.