

ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF JOHN PAUL LYTTLE

This day was made by the Lord: we rejoice and are glad. The ordination of a new priest proclaims to our 21C a thrilling truth. --That God exists: He is a loving Father Who created us and Who cares for us. --That Jesus Christ His Son, is One for Whom a man can give up everything, even his very life, in order to follow Him. --And that the Holy Spirit is powerful, able to give a man a vocation and the grace to achieve it. More, the ordination of a new priest joyfully proclaims that the Catholic Church is thriving, despite 2000 years of turbulent history, that it's great to belong to the Church Christ founded, and to serve it. This is why today, the Feast of St. Thomas, we happily celebrate the ordination of John Paul Lyttle. It's been an extraordinary journey, 16 years, not without suffering and a frightening accident, but one, through the prayers of St. John Paul II, directed by God's Providence. We are all proud of you JP and grateful for what you are doing: your parents, your grandmother, your sisters and their families, the parish of Waterlooville, our Diocese, and all your friends here, me too. As you lie prostrate on the sanctuary floor in self-sacrifice, we not only recall the part we've played in this journey but renew our total trust in God's providential care of us too.

Make your home in me as I make mine in you. There's much I'd like to say, though Jesus Himself says it all in the Gospel we've just heard. *As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.* As a priest, the most crucial thing is not to let the green wood dry out, but to keep developing every day a *deeper* personal-passionate relationship with the Lord. Listen to His words: *Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty, but cut off from me, you can do nothing.* Promise God today that you'll offer the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours every day, that you'll regularly go to Confession and have spiritual direction, that you'll do spiritual reading and study the three-fold work of Christ as Priest, Teacher and Shepherd. Above all, promise now to spend an hour a day in Eucharistic Adoration, united with the Lord. Otherwise, you'll lose your way for *anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away; he withers.* If you keep the green wood green, you'll not only be able to love your people well, but you'll also be able to face anything that comes along, no matter how awkward or difficult.

I have been crucified with Christ and I live now not my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. People often think that celibacy is the hardest part of being a priest, a lonely life of self-denial. True, chastity and celibacy make demands. But the most challenging promise a priest undertakes is obedience, from *ob-audire* to listen to. Obedience means being *Christ-centred* not *self-centred*. It means putting Christ first. It means listening daily to what He asks of me in the Church's Bible, Tradition and Teaching and putting it into practise in the situation I find myself in. It's amazing what you have to do as a priest, everything from leading a funeral to being a janitor! No two days are the same. But obedience often takes us beyond our comfort-zone. You often have to wear yourself out, like Jesus, seemingly in vain. In fact, it costs you everything. For our spirituality as secular priests is to do well what we have to do. The reward is in the doing. For this work is God's work, a *leit-ergon*, a work of praise, a work, which is the Lord Himself. This is where celibacy, in imitation of Christ, is a great help. Like Him, we must daily listen; we must daily obey; we must daily do what is needed

*May God Who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfilment. Today, JP, is like the end of a long journey. Yet it's really the start of a great adventure, a new way of life in Christ and the Spirit, a course and trajectory to be filled with joy and consolation. To serve is to reign for God has called you to this self-sacrifice. He will never let you down. He will fill you as a spiritual father with much love for the flock. I promise you, you've chosen the best, the greatest, the most fulfilling way of life a man could ever choose. So in this Mass, as we call on Mary, Mother of the Clergy, on St. Thomas whose feast day we celebrate, and on St. John Paul your patron, we ask the Lord to bless you with his love. May you be filled with happiness. May you persevere in your vocation. And may you one day be found worthy to enter Paradise and hear the Lord Jesus Himself speak to you those exhilarating words: *Well done, good and faithful servant; come and enter the happiness of your Lord.**