

Homily for the ordination to the priesthood of Edwin Barnes

St John's Cathedral

Portsmouth

March 5th 2011

One of the many moving aspects of your ordination to the diaconate, Edwin, a couple of weeks ago, was the demonstrably humble approach to the Sacrament of Orders. After all, you had worked as a deacon, a priest and a bishop in the Church of England for many years, and yet, here you were, as it were, starting all over again at the bottom of the ministerial ladder. I have no doubt that this was hard for you, but at the same time, there is a real sense of continuity and, indeed, fulfilment, in your journey towards ordination to the priesthood today.

This is an occasion which is deeply joyful and significant for you, for your brother priests and friends in the Ordinariate, as well as for us in the diocese and indeed for the whole Catholic Church. That sense of joy is beautifully picked up in that lovely reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians when he writes:

"Always be joyful, then, in the Lord. I repeat, be joyful...the Lord is near...tell him all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition...be guarded in your hearts and thoughts by the peace of God which is beyond our understanding..." (Phil 4: 4-7)

I believe that today is a real homecoming for you. Throughout your priestly life, you have sought and searched for authority in your ministry – the authority of Christ of which today's Gospel speaks. I believe that your search is now over and today you submit yourself willingly and joyfully to the authority of Christ within the Christ-given authority of the Catholic Church.

But this is no moment for triumphalism, except for proclaiming the triumph of God's grace of vocation which you have embraced. In accepting ordination, in accepting the gifts that come with that acceptance from God's people to be offered to Him, you will now know in a new way what you are doing as a priest. You will imitate the mysteries that you celebrate and increasingly you will continue to model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.

But just as your diaconal ordination was marked by humility, so the same is true today. Quoting from the first reading – from the Prophet Isaiah – you say that "I am a man of unclean lips" and yet, cleansed anew by the Spirit of God, you are inspired to say, "Here I am, Lord; send me." You are truly sent today into the priesthood of Christ and to minister in his Church.

I said it before at your diaconal ordination and I say it again now, there is something radically new in what we do together here today. You are being ordained here today as a priest in full communion with the Catholic Church. You are ordained to serve the whole Church and not just the Ordinariate. From today you will be working with your Ordinary and with the bishops. From today, you will celebrate the mysteries of Christ with a new fullness. You will preach the Gospel of Christ from the heart of the communion of the Church. You will renew and fulfil that consecration to Christ which has always marked your life until now. But that consecration is being brought to its fullness today in the communion of the Church.

I know that I speak for all here today when I say that I wish you all possible blessings, Edwin. On behalf of all, I pledge you our prayers. We all join you in your rejoicing and it is simply wonderful to be able to welcome you home after your long journey of faith.