

## Mass of Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate

Steven Defer, Pedro (Bong) Estoque, Francis Lau, Wayne Provencal

[*Numbers* 3.5-9; *Acts* 6.1-7a; *John* 12. 24-26]

Tonight the Archdiocese of Edmonton gathers with joy around four men who are about to be admitted to the sacred order of deacons: Steven Defer, Pedro Estoque, Francis Lau, and Wayne Provencal. A celebration such as this is testimony to the fidelity of God to his Church. The people of God need ministers to serve them, and the call of these men to the diaconate gives witness to the providential care of God for His children.

As the ordination takes place, and at other times in the mass, masks will be donned. This is unusual, to put it mildly, and we wish that we didn't have to do this. At the same time, the masks can serve tonight as a symbol to help us appreciate the particular ministry of the deacon in the Church and world.

A mask obscures identity. It covers the face, partially or fully, and thus renders identification difficult, especially if the person wearing the mask has not previously been encountered. The mission of the Church is to make Christ known to the world. This necessitates that we all be particularly attentive to the ways in which the divine countenance can become "masked" and people thus prevented from coming to know the Lord.

Life supplies such "masks" in abundance, via the various forms of suffering that come our way. Very often we hear it said that pain and anguish lead people to doubt God's love or even to question His existence. In other words, the face of Christ, which reflects fully the mercy and love of God, can become obscured from view when misery besets us. We look to our new deacons to keep the face of our Lord "unmasked" by means of their threefold ministry to Word, altar and charity.

Steve, Bong, Francis and Wayne, the ministry of liturgical preaching is about to be entrusted to you. Your ministry to the Word must at all times be such that the face of Christ is accurately manifested. By your proclamation, enable others to see the true identity of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour, whose death and resurrection has robbed suffering, sin and death of its power. The words you speak to the people of God will be ones of great encouragement if they point to Christ as the reason for true hope. Reveal his face not only by your words, but also by the witness of a disciple's life, one fully surrendered to his will.

Your ministry at the altar must also unmask Christ's true identity. As foreshadowed in the appointment of Levites to assist the priestly clan of Aaron, by your ordination you will be enabled to assist the priest at the Eucharistic sacrifice. Service at the table of the Lord is the true sense of the mission of the deacon to "wait on tables", as we heard in *Acts*. At the altar of the Mass, the mystery of the Cross is rendered present. Your assistance will point to Christ, will reveal his face, if you model your own life on

his. As we learn from the Gospel, Jesus is that grain whose death brought life to the world. Be prepared, then, to lay down your life for the sake of making Christ known.

Finally, your ministry of charity must point to Christ. This is the most distinctive dimension of diaconal ministry. Bishop and priest are configured to Christ the Head and High Priest of the Church, and so celebrate the sacraments *in persona Christi* and govern the Church in his name. Deacons are configured to Christ the servant, who came among us not to be served but to serve. In caring for the poor and needy, deacons, in virtue of the gift of the Spirit received at ordination, sacramentalize, make visible, the face of Christ the servant. Love, then, as Christ loved; serve as he served. Strive to know the people entrusted to your care. Be not distant from their hopes and fears, their joys and sufferings. May they know each of you as a man willing to give himself fully to help them experience the love and mercy of Christ.

Steve, Bong, Francis and Wayne, we know that this is a day of great joy for all of you. Know that I and the Archdiocese of Edmonton rejoice with you. We are grateful to you for seeking to hear the voice of the Lord and responding generously with your lives to his call. Thank you for saying yes to Christ. We pledge you our prayer and support.

I reserve a special word of recognition and thanks to your wives. Nancy, Rhoda, Ivy, and Mary-Ann, from the beginning of your husbands' journey of discernment, you have been their faithful companions and most fervent supporters. The ministry that they assume today represents a significant change, indeed a sacrifice, for you as well as for your husbands. But I know, as do all of us gathered here, that it is a sacrifice made out of love. We are grateful for the support you will continue to give your husbands as they fulfill their diaconal role in this local Church.

Brothers, I now invite you to step forward to make your promises before God and the Church. Rely always with full confidence on the never-failing love of the Lord, who has called you and who will not fail to sustain you.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith  
St. Joseph's Basilica  
July 21, 2020