

ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

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**Feast of Saint Edmund Campion, and Robert Southwell and the other English
Jesuit Martyrs**

1 DECEMBER 2007



Greg, Younsu, Ardi and Jub.

It is most appropriate that the first words of this homily should be addressed to the parents and families of Greg, Younsu, Ardi and Jub. None of you men dropped out of the clouds, but were formed in the context of a family which loved and moulded you, passing on their values and outlooks, and their Faith in Christ. We thank your families for the gift of their sons, both to the Society, and now to be ordained to Sacred Ministry in the Church.

Yesterday the Province buried Father Mac Larkin, a gentle and much-loved Jesuit Priest. His ministries ranged from dealing with the youngest of children as head of a Junior School, to moving very successfully amongst university students as Chaplain of St John Fisher and at Newman College. It was an apostolate to all ages. That event yesterday, and your Ordination as Deacons today, makes pertinent the Communion verse for today's Mass – *“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it brings forth a rich harvest.”*

Mac has died, and you rise to this new level of reception of Holy Orders. Apart from the symbols of death and new life, there is also the strongly Eucharistic overtone, with a grain of wheat changing into new life. And you four men are to receive Holy Orders as Deacons on your path to priesthood, when you will celebrate the Eucharist of the Lord as Priests. It is also a happy event that today is the Feast of the English Jesuit Martyrs. There is Our Lord's Prayer in today's Gospel, pertinent for you as Jesuits. *“Keep them in your name, which you have given me ... while I was with them I kept them in your name. ...For their sake, I consecrate myself; consecrate them in your truth”*.

Your diaconate will be an act of consecration, and act of the Church. The Church is setting you aside in Holy Orders to serve God's people. In the vows you took as Jesuits you offered yourself as men who would be vowed to serve God's people. In your Ordination today, it is the Church who acts towards you, consecrating you. And

as Deacons who are Jesuits, there is the prayer of Christ that you be kept in His Name, as you already bear that name in the Society which bears His Name.

Being a Jesuit feast, and you four men coming from four different countries, it takes one back to the “Deliberation of the First Fathers”, given in Lent, 1559:

*“We knew full well that
though we were weak men
from regions far apart and
of widely differing customs,
still the most kind and loving Lord
had mercifully brought us together
and made us one.*

*For even great hardships
in working to better unite God and man,
hardships that would frustrate our best efforts
if each worked alone,
could surely be borne and overcome
by our shared courage and our united strengths.*

Ardi – you first became involved with the Jesuits when you attended Kolese Loyola in Semarang. You combined your studies in Electrical Engineering with a great love of music and song. Music is very much part of your life. Indeed, you have composed the second hymn we will sing at Holy Communion in this your Diaconate Ordination ceremony. Through your reading of the lives of the Jesuit Saints, it brought you closer to the sense of a vocation, as did the preoccupation of the Society with issues of Social Justice. You entered the tertiary world and have been working in the Intellectual Apostolate, undertaking your regency in Sanata Dharma University in Djogjakarta. Here in Melbourne, you have found the Indonesian community to be almost a third family for you, and you have cherished their support.

Greg Jacobs – growing up in Wagga Wagga, completing your schooling and then becoming involved with the St Vincent De Paul Society, attracted by their concern for the poor. In the Society of Jesus, you have undertaken your studies in Science, and

the intellectual apostolate of the Jesuits has appealed to you. You enjoyed your regency greatly, because of the involvement with youth. You were a soccer coach and not too successful at first. So you told your team that you would run around the oval for every goal they scored, so the little blighters did that the next week and won 12 goals to 1! I should also tell you, Greg, that you were going to change your relationship to me, from that when I was the Headmaster and you were the scholastic on the staff, to what is described in the *Didascalía of Antioch* in the year 230:-

“The deacon will be the ear and the mouth, the heart and the soul of the bishop”.

So you and I are coming into quite an anatomical relationship! Welcome on board! Your involvement too has been with music, and the St Francis Choir, especially.

Younsu – the notion of the priesthood has attracted you from an early age, Younsu. You have had a number of dreams, and they are all connected with beauty and service. You wanted to be a poet, and the poet is the maker of words, the one who puts into words the dreams of others, and their love of beauty. It also took you to undertake studies in French Literature. In your National Service, you worked as an Ambulance Driver, and after entering you were involved very much with street children, helping the people of your own country who are at the margins. It was your Aunty, a Religious Sister, who pointed you towards the Jesuits. Here in Melbourne, you have been involved with the Korean community, conducting prayer groups, and finding in that community, very strong friends.

Jub – you have been involved intensely with refugee work for over fifteen years. You have worked in the vast refugee camps on the Thai border, and in Cambodia, and you have worked with refugees in Africa and in East Timor. It was your Jesuit brother, Vichai who helped point you towards work with the Jesuit Refugee Service, and with the Mercy Refugee Service. As you said to me, you were continually confronted by the fact that you were trying to help people in refugee camps who simply had no choice in life, and yet you had great choice. You worked with these people at the edges, you knew their despair and you knew the violence. You were involved strongly with the Centre of the Dove, the school geared towards the education of victims of land mines, limbless students, and to this you bought your studies in

Engineering. Here in Melbourne, you have been strongly involved with the Cambodian community, and in working at the Way, the place of refuge for homeless and alcoholic men.

You four men are about to be ordained into Holy Orders, into the ancient office of Deacon. We see in Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6, that the Apostles appointed “Seven men of good reputation, who were with the Holy Spirit”. They were to care for the poor and the widows. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was a deacon, and thus showed the role of Witness must, or can accompany, the office of Deacon, the Witness to charity and the Faith in deeds. Already by the first or second decade of the second century, it was clear that there were three levels of clergy in the Church – the Episcopoi, the Presbyteroi, and the Diaconoi. In the Church of Rome, there were seven areas, related to seven diaconates. They were places of the deacons, established for public assistance and they played the roles of asylums, hospitals, hospices for pilgrims, food distribution centres for the poor.

From all this, one can see the role of the deacon is to be involved in the ministry of compassion and justice, a ministry of the Word in practice. And a ministry at the altar, attached to the bishop. The deacons in the early Church had great influence because they were associated closely with the Bishop, and in Rome with the Holy Father. In the 4th and 5th centuries, some nine deacons were made Pope, and we know St Lawrence the Martyr was a deacon.

As your ordination will be a transitional diaconate, it is better to look at this step as your entry into Holy Orders. According to Rahner, and those who follow his rule of thought, Christ is the Sacrament of God. In other words, the absolute self-communication of God took place in Jesus. Jesus is the one in whom God is expressing himself so perfectly as the author of all being and life. And in turn, the Church is the Sacrament of Christ, being the Body of Christ in the world, and the Sacraments derived from the Church as a Body of Christ, expressing authentic ways in which the self-giving of Christ is given to us. It was given to us first in Baptism, and Confirmation, and then Eucharist and in other Sacraments and today is to be expressed to you through Holy Orders.

Theologians used to speak of the “Sacramental character” bestowed by ordination. It was an interpretation that went right back to St Augustine who was defending the unrepeatability of baptism, for a Sacrament once given, cannot be given again. Something does happen to the inner person with the Sacrament; the Sacrament imposes a configuration, an orientation on the person that can never be revoked. We can be dispensed from a vow, but never from a Sacrament. It is as if a Sacrament is a permanent seal upon our hearts, a gift that the self-giving God never withdraws, as he never did with Jesus, His Son.

In that context of the sense of gift and the giving of the Father and the giving of Christ to us, there is the poem by St Robert Southwell SJ, whose Feast it also is today:-

*“Gift better than himself God doth not know;
Gift better than his God no man can see.
God is my gift, himself he freely gave me;
God’s gift am I, and none but God shall have me.”*

So as deacons may you draw new strength from the gift of the Holy Spirit that will be bestowed upon you. May you help the Bishop and his body of priests as ministers of the Word, of the altar, and in deeds in charity. May you make yourself servants of all. As ministers of the altar, you will proclaim the Gospel, prepare the sacrifice, and give the Lord’s Body and Blood to the community of believers.

It will also be your duty to bring God’s Word to the believer and unbeliever alike, to preside over public prayer, to baptise, to assist at marriages and bless them, to give viaticum to the dying, and to lead the rites of burial. Once you are consecrated by the laying of hands, the act that comes to us from the Apostles, and are bound more closely to the altar, you will perform works of love and charity in the name of the Bishop or the Pastor to whom he delegates that. From the way you go about your duties, may the people recognise you as disciples of Jesus, who came to serve, and not to be served.

I said at the beginning, that none of you men dropped from the clouds. I thank your families again, those who formed you, and I thank the Society of Jesus for who it has prepared you for this great step. You men are about to be set aside in Holy Orders for

the Ministry of the Church. There are the words of St Edmund Campion, on this his Feast:-

“And touching our Society, be it known to you that we have made a league – all the Jesuits in the world, - cheerfully to carry the cross you shall lay upon us, and never to despair your recovery. ... The expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun; it is of God; it cannot be withstood.”

So I end with the prayer of Jesus from today’s Gospel, that He may keep you in His Name. For your sake, He consecrated Himself, and His Prayer now is that you too be consecrated in Christ’s truth.

Amen.

Bishop G. J. O’Kelly, SJ

Auxiliary Bishop of Adelaide