

# **Ordination to the Priesthood**

**Guy Zidago**

# **Ordination to the Diaconate**

**Felix Min**

## **Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**

Holy Rosary Cathedral

8 December 2018

Dear Bishop David Monroe, brother priests and deacons, consecrated women and men, seminarians, *ordinandi*, family and friends of those to be ordained, brothers and sisters in Christ:

### ***Introduction***

As God's priestly people, you have just given your consent that these two men – your sons, brothers and friends – having been chosen by God, and prepared by their families and formators, should be ordained to share in the ministry of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Today we are celebrating the solemn feast of Mary's Immaculate Conception: that is, "the mystery of God's grace that enfolded her from the first instant of her existence as the creature destined to be Mother of the Redeemer, preserving her from the stain of original sin."<sup>1</sup>

It was not by chance that God called Mary to do his will. He prepared her. Nor does he call us by chance. At work in every vocation is an inner awareness that the call is not of human origin or merely a

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Angelus* (8 December 2007).

human choice. Rather, it is a response to the Lord who has first chosen us as Jesus said at the Last Supper: “you did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). Their free consent to the Lord’s choice, like Our Lady’s, will be outwardly evident when they prostrate themselves before the altar before my hands, in a gesture that goes back to the Apostles themselves – are laid upon them.

Mary’s response to the Angel Gabriel is echoed here today. Like her, our *ordinandi* recognize that from this day forward they are to do all things according to God’s Word (cf. Lk 1:38), and for his glory. They are responding to this divine call by consecrating themselves to God’s plans for their ministry.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the Benedictine monks of Westminster Abbey, the formators of the Neocatechumenal Way and the priests of the Archdiocese for their tireless human, spiritual, theological, and pastoral accompaniment of Guy and Felix. My sincere thanks also extend to the parish communities which over the years have sustained our *ordinandi* by their witness, support and prayer, especially the parishioners of Blessed Sacrament, St. Andrew Kim and St. Patrick’s Parish.

And, of course, we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the prayer and affirmation of their families. My thanks to the parents and relatives for their accompaniment and encouragement of our *ordinandi*

on their journey to this day.

### ***Closeness to God Is Closeness to People***

What can today's feast of the Immaculate Conception tell us about what we can expect from those ordained to the Church's ministry? I will suggest just two things.

First, the closer a person is to God, the closer that person is to God's people. We see this in Mary. The fact that she is totally with God as "full of grace" is precisely why she is so close to all of us as our Mother.

In this way, she models the closeness expected of the ordained minister to the people he is entrusted to serve. Like Mary, they are to live in an intimate relationship with God so as to bring Jesus to others. Moreover, they are to be available for those in any kind of need or weakness or sin,<sup>2</sup> helping them to recognize that they are loved by God who wills their salvation. The ordained are to look at their people from their heart: with compassion, love, and infinite tenderness, especially those who are lonely, suffering, despised, or exploited.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Ordained Ministry Is To Free Us From Sin***

Second, in view of her motherhood, Mary was preserved from

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (8 December 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, Address (8 December 2009).

original sin, from that fracture in communion with God, with others and with creation, which deeply wounds every human being. And, throughout her life she preserved that beauty of being “full of grace.”

Likewise, God has chosen each of us to live a holy life.<sup>4</sup> Looking at Mary, we recognize the loftiness of God’s plan for us: “to be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph 1:4).

The Book of Genesis tells us of the obstacles to this holiness that we still encounter. It recounts the original “no” to God, when we human beings preferred to gaze upon ourselves rather than on our Creator. We wanted to go our own way, and chose to be self-sufficient.

But, unlike Adam whose sin made him hide himself from God (cf. Gen 3:10), Mary, the New Eve, responded to God’s call with, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Deacons and priests are to lead us to living a life directed toward God instead of toward ourselves, to live according to his word.<sup>5</sup> Their vocation in the Church is precisely this: to help us, through their teaching the word of truth (cf. 2 Tim 2:15), which is the Gospel, and through their celebration of the Sacraments, to lead lives pleasing to

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (8 December 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (8 December 2018).

God. They are constantly to remind us that, like Mary, we are to give the Lord's call a total "yes." one without conditions or reservations. And they are to call us to account when we are tempted to compromise and accept a life of spiritual mediocrity.<sup>6</sup> Like good shepherds, they are to lead us on the right paths to the Kingdom.

### ***Conclusion***

We are counting on you, dear brothers, to imitate Mary, who, immediately upon receiving the Angel's announcement, went to share the gift of her fruitfulness with Elizabeth. Because through Ordination you are receiving a great gift, always remember that you are to pass on and share with us the treasures of the Church – the Word of God and the Sacraments – which will lead us to Christ, the source of our salvation.<sup>7</sup>

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Francis (8 December 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Francis (8 December 2014).