

HOMILY
ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER PROWSE
CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN
PERMANENT DIACONATE ORDINATION OF DON MAURO SALVADOR GOMEZ
ST CHRISTOPHER'S CATHEDRAL
5.00PM WEDNESDAY 19TH AUGUST 2026
AND MASS ONLINE

Readings

Jeremiah 1:4-9

Romans 12:4-8

John 15:12-17

In summary, the official Liturgy for the ordination of a Deacon has this to say about his role: They will help the Bishop and his Priests as ministers of the Word, and altar, and charity. They are to be servants of all (Diakonia). As ministers of the altar they will proclaim the Gospel, prepare the Eucharistic sacrifice, give the Body and Blood of Jesus to the community of believers. They are to evangelise. They are to preside over public prayer. They are to Baptise. They are to bless Marriages. They are to give Viaticum to the dying and lead the rites of Burial. They are to perform works of charity.

This is a rather precise "job description", isn't it?

I suppose the main take home points are as follows. First, Deacons are not priests or bishops. They do participate in the Sacrament of Holy Orders which is linked with priests and bishops, but they have their own unique understanding.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear of the word "Deacons." In the Latin Church at least, over time, it has taken on a transitional role for a person who is ultimately moving towards the priesthood.

In the Vatican II Council there is still debate about whether the Permanent Diaconate is the restoration of an ancient Order or if it is something quite unique?

Indeed, all of us could say it is an expression, in its most fundamental understanding, of activating our Baptism. All of us are to do this through our Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Baptism is the gateway Sacrament. It gives birth to all sorts of Ministries. We can think of the ministry of Lector, the ministry of Acolyte, and the ministry of Catechist (like a local evangeliser). These ministries have been renewed in more recent years, and we will hear a lot more about them soon.

Then of course coming from our Baptism is the important topic of Charisms. This is where the Holy Spirit gives special gifts to his Church at certain times in certain places to certain people.

With such a background now let us focus on the present moment. We welcome Don Mauro Salvador Gomez to our Mass this evening. He is petitioning the Church for the Diaconate in the Permanent state.

In a formal letter of application written to me earlier this year, Don reflected on the 6 "Don's in his life. "From the young Don at age seven carrying the processional cross at Mass, to the teenage Don who was a seminarian, to the migrant Don who set foot in Australia, to the husband Don who kept his faith at what could have been Cerisse's deathbed, to the father Don who prayerfully endeavours to raise his household and children in the faith, and to the Don of today who ministers to migrants, refugees, and the clergy – the Lord Jesus' call has always been the same. And with utmost humility, and with an acknowledgement of my limitations, I respond to this call with my 'yes.'"

Don was born in Pampanga, Luzon, Philippines in 1988. He is married to Cerisse Erica, and they have two wonderful little girls, Dominiq and Dennise. As a family they first came to Australia in 2015. He came to Australia as a skilled migrant in psychology. Their first destination was Darwin. From there they moved to Canberra where Don commenced employment at the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office. He continues this and now also assists Clergy, Life and Ministry efforts at the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

It seems to me, having gotten to know this wonderful couple, that Cerisse, his wife, has been his first Formator regarding Don's Diaconate. Indeed, it was her prompting to come to Canberra in the first instance. She was keen to come and immediately enquire about the Permanent Diaconate. She counselled him not to be afraid but to trust in God. She is a kind of Jeremiah from today's Readings. She has affirmed Don's calling to the Diaconate as God's grace and gift.

So now we have arrived at this moment. Don's Diaconate ordination builds on his Baptism, but it also builds on the Sacrament of Matrimony. I have been impressed to see that this seems to be just as much Cerisse's calling in many ways as her husband's...As it should be. With Cerisse we have two for ministry! Tonight the Archdiocese has received a gift of two. Could it be that Don and Cerisse are "modern day married Saints like Prisca and Aquila" from the Acts of the Apostles? Whatever the future holds we place it in the hands of the Lord.

Baptism/Matrimony/Holy Orders are all animated by the love of Jesus spoken of by Jesus in today's Gospel from St John.

Don himself has been inspired by the words of St Augustine over the years on the love of Jesus. He wants to live this in a special way as a Permanent Deacon. St Augustine's beautiful prayer says, "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of people. That is what love looks like." So, Don is now to become a Deacon inspired by love in service of God, having learnt this in a special way through his marriage to Cerisse.

We pray for them tonight and all those watching from the Philippines via live stream.

Two final points before we continue now with the Ordination.

This evening gives me an opportunity to thank recent migrants to Australia...especially in this Mass, Filipino people.

Thank you so much for bringing your faith to multicultural Australia. Thank you so much for your belief in marriage and family life. Thank you for your laughter, joy and hope and yes, thank you for your photographs. I have often thought that the Filipino national motto should be, "Just one more!" Thank you for your hospitality. I understand we are to receive some of this following the ceremony with refreshments in the hall. Who knows what might be there, could there be some Pancit, Adobo, Lumpia, Sinigang, Lecheflan and Halo Halo? I hope there is no Balut and no Axucena!

To all the Filipino people I say, on behalf of all the Bishops of Australia, a heartfelt – "Maraming Salamat Mabuhay Ang Pilipinas!"

Secondly and finally, this ordination to the Diaconate tonight takes place during our Archdiocesan Assembly week which will be culminating this Saturday with our Plenary gathering. So let us pray in this Mass that God will bless us this week, especially Saturday. I also ask you to join us, it is not too late to register. It all focuses on synodality and its place in the Church of now and the future. I am sure you know all about this because you have lived it out when bringing your culture to Australia.

Synodality is walking together in the Lord rather than walking singly. It also means discerning together rather than alone. Thank you for bringing the plural "we" to so many of us who see Catholicism in the singular "all about me." Teach us dear migrants how to live out the Church in a synodal way.

As we move towards 2033, we recall it will be the 2,000-year anniversary of the Death and Resurrection and Good News of Jesus Christ amongst us.

We now see Don commit himself to service in the Church, especially in practical ways to the poor and the marginalised. May we live out the two commissions of our faith.

The commission to "Love one another as I have loved you."

Then the other commission (and never to be an omission) "Go out to the whole world and Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and know that I am with you always until the end of time."

Don and Cerisse and children, may you know that God is with you on this night and until the end of time.

"Mabuhay Ang Pilipinas!"