

**ORDINATION OF DEACONS
DAVID EDWARD CURTIN AND HYLAND L. SMITH**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Saturday, April 28, 2012**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear priests, deacons, consecrated religious, *ordinandi* and their families and friends, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today we celebrate the commitment of David Curtin and Hyland Smith to the diaconal ministry of the Catholic Church. In this ceremony, they will receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders, by which they will be ordained to the Order of Deacon as a transitional step toward their eventual goal of being ordained priests for our diocese next year.

To say that this is a “transitional step” towards priesthood should not be taken to imply that this a temporary status that will be discarded like a booster rocket being jettisoned when you move on to the next stage. Under my chasuble I am wearing a deacon’s dalmatic not only as a symbol of the fullness of Holy Orders that a bishop has received, but also as a reminder to me that the Order of Deacon that I received thirty-five years ago next Monday always remains with me as part of my ministry. After all, the

Sacrament of Holy Orders imparts an indelible character on the soul that does not disappear when a person receives another Order. Rather than successive stages, each of the Holy Orders is a layer that builds on the preceding one and provides a foundation that supports the higher orders, but always remains an inseparable part of the whole fabric of ordained ministry in the Church.

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonia*, which means service. In the passage from the Gospel of St. John (12:24-26) that we have just heard, Jesus said, “Whoever serves me must follow me.” These references to “serving” and “following” do not mean just coming along for the ride, but demand an active commitment to be a worker in the Lord’s vineyard.

In the Old Testament reading from the Book of Numbers (3:5-9), the Lord told Moses that the service that the assistants were to render to his brother, Aaron, the high priest, would involve “custody of all of the furnishings of the meeting tent and discharges the duties of the Israelites in the service of the Dwelling.” What He was saying was that this would involve work.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us how the Twelve appointed deacons to the task of waiting on the tables (Acts 6:1-7). Again, the Scriptures are talking about work, not a life of leisure and honors.

My dear sons in Christ, David and Hyland, I am not asking you to be workaholics, but the Church is calling you to a labor of love to be engaged in with joyful zeal, enthusiasm and dedication. Although Saint Thomas Aquinas described work as a *bonum arduum*, that is, an arduous task, this does not take away from the fact that work is a good thing. Our great Holy Father, Blessed John Paul II, explained this in his encyclical on human work, *Laborem exercens*, in which he wrote: “Work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man *not only transforms nature*, adapting it to his own needs, but he also *achieves fulfillment* as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes ‘more a human being’” (# 9).

David and Hyland, among your work as deacons will be to help the Bishop and his priests in the ministry of the word, of the altar, and of charity, showing yourselves to be servants of all. As ministers of the altar, you will proclaim the Gospel, prepare the sacrifice, and distribute the Lord’s Body and Blood to the faithful. Furthermore, it will be your duty, at

the Bishop's direction, to exhort believers and unbelievers alike and instruct them in holy doctrine. You will preside over public prayer, administer Baptism, assist at and bless Marriages, bring Viaticum to the dying, and conduct funeral rites. In order to conform your ministry to the mission of the Church, you will promise respect and obedience to me as your Diocesan Bishop.

You will exercise your ministry committed to the celibate state: compelled by the sincere love of Christ the Lord and embracing this state with total dedication, you will cling to Christ more easily with an undivided heart. Firmly rooted and grounded in faith, you are to show yourselves chaste and beyond reproach before God and neighbor, as is proper for the ministers of Christ and of the stewards of God's mysteries.

You will also promise to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours with and for the People of God and indeed for the whole world. This duty is not merely a daily routine, but another way to keep your heart close to the Lord and to the people you serve.

As part of our ordination ceremony today, you will be vested in the sacred stole and dalmatic. The stole symbolizes the yoke of Jesus Christ, the burden of authority that is gentle to bear because it is an authority of

service (cf. Matthew 11:28; 20:28). The dalmatic takes the form of a cross and is worn during the Sacrifice of the Mass as a reminder of Christ's Passion, as well as his generous and loving action of self-giving. These sacred vestments that will soon be entrusted to you are a constant reminder of the promise you will presently make "to conform your way of life always to the example of Christ, of whose Body and Blood you are ministers at the altar" (*Ordination of Deacons*, 200).

When I give to you the *Book of the Gospels*, I will entrust you with the task of being heralds of Christ (cf. *Ordination of Deacons*, 210). Never allow yourselves to be turned away from the Gospel. Now you are not only hearers of this Gospel but also its ministers.

Carrying out the tasks of your ministry with ardor and devotion, you are to express by your actions the word of God which your lips proclaim, so that the Christian people, filled with life by the Spirit, may be a pure offering accepted by God. Then on the last day, when you go out to meet the Lord, you will be able to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord."

May God give you this grace. Amen.