

**Homily for the Ordination of Steven Arisman and Seth Brown
to the Sacred Order of Deacons
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**

**Saturday of the Octave of Easter
April 6, 2013**

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

Reverend Monsignors and Fathers, Deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: It is a great pleasure to welcome you here to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception as the joy of Easter is intensified for us today with the ordination of two Deacons for the Church of Springfield in Illinois.

The call of the Lord often comes in unexpected ways and often to unexpected people, even to those not expecting to be called. So it is that the leaders of the people were “amazed” at the “boldness” of Peter and John, whom they knew to be “uneducated” and “ordinary” men (Acts 4:13). Mary Magdalene, having once been possessed by seven demons, seemed an unlikely messenger to carry the news of the Lord’s Resurrection to the Eleven (cf. Mark 16:9-10). Likewise, those two disciples who set off into the country were surely not expecting to encounter the Risen Lord and to be sent by him to the others (cf. Mark 16:12).

Even today, with the election of these two candidates for Holy Orders – one of whom is quiet and reserved and other not so much – I’ll let you figure out which is which! – the Lord’s call may be somewhat unexpected. From both the Scriptures we have heard today and from the example of Seth and Steve, we see that the Lord does not have a cookie-cutter mold of person or personality whom he calls to either Holy Orders or to the consecrated life. Rather, he calls those whom he wills, those who will willingly and gladly “go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

Whoever hears the call of the Lord to a life dedicated in service to the Church should not be too surprised. While it is true that we are all unworthy of such a call, the Lord has ways of making use of unworthy instruments, provided they are also humble instruments, as we see repeatedly in the Scriptures. Those who begin to hear his call should seek to attune their ears all the more closely to the voice of the Lord, to that voice that speaks of peace.

In his Message for the 50th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which will be observed on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 21st, His Holiness Benedict XVI succinctly expressed what it means to follow Jesus:

Accepting his invitation means no longer choosing our own path. Following him means immersing our own will in the will of Jesus, truly giving him priority, giving him pride of place in every area of our lives: in the family, at work, in our personal interests, in ourselves. It means handing over our very lives to Him, living in profound intimacy with Him, and consequently with our brothers and sisters.

In just a few moments you, Steve and Seth, will “promise respect and obedience to me and my successors.” In this commitment, which you both will make willingly and freely, is the expression of your desires to no longer live for yourselves but to live entirely for the Lord and for his faithful people.

Whenever you wear the dalmatic that will soon be entrusted to you, see in this vestment of the Deacon the emblem of what your life must now become. With its shape in the form of a cross, the dalmatic shall be a continual reminder to you and to all of your “resolve to conform your way of life always to the example of Christ.” Likewise, William Durandus, the thirteenth century Bishop of Mende (France), reminds us that the dalmatic has “large sleeves and long” because the Deacon “must not have a hand

closed from giving and stretched out to receive.”¹ The Deacon must instead strive to keep the counsel of the Prophet Isaiah who says the fast desired by the Lord is “sharing your bread with the hungry [and] bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house” (Isaiah 58:7).

From this day forward your home will be the Church. It is to the Church, then, that you must bring the afflicted, the homeless, the poor, the downtrodden, and the dejected and the hungry! You, as servants of Christ, must go out “to the ‘outskirts’ where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters.”²

As you walk the streets of this world, you must show to others by the charity of your words and the quality of your life the joy that comes from knowing and following Jesus. There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind who it is that you serve; his love must be made manifest in everything you do and say. It is not enough to preach the Gospel without words; you, as Deacons, must preach the Gospel by the manner of your lives and the words of your mouths. To you, especially, the words of the Lord are addressed: “Go into the whole world and *proclaim* the Gospel to every creature.”

Know as you go into the world, as you walk its streets, that the Risen Lord walks with you and sees what you see. Indeed, “In the midst of our everyday circumstances he continues to speak to us; he calls us to live our life with him, for only he is capable of satisfying our thirst for hope.”³ You must not only seek to listen daily to his voice and to answer his call to live for him, but you must allow him to use your voices to announce this call. Allow yourselves to be his trumpets, echoing far and wide the harmonious sound of his love so that all people may raise one unified hymn to God for the marvelous deeds he has done.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ William Durandus, *Rationale of the Divine Office*, III.11.2.

² Pope Francis, Homily for the Chrism Mass, March 28, 2013.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the 50th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.