

**Homily for the Ordination of Priests**

**Robert Johnson  
Aaron Kuhn  
Dominic Rankin  
Mark Tracy  
Adam Zawadzki**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

**May 26, 2018**

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

My dear priests, deacons, consecrated religious, seminarians, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

*Great Expectations* is the name given by the esteemed 19<sup>th</sup> century British author Charles Dickens to one of his most famous classic novels. Dickens himself had great expectations for this novel, and indeed it is widely considered to be his greatest literary accomplishment. The story focuses on the lifelong journey of moral development for the novel's protagonist, an orphan named Pip, about whom Dickens wrote that "he will come into handsome property" and "be brought up as a gentleman--in a word, as a young fellow of great expectations." Not only does Pip have high hopes for his monetary inheritance and the improvements that he

expects it will bring him in life, but it is the grand hopes and great expectations of so many of the characters of this novel that links them together.

Great expectations and grand hopes are also what we have for our five deacons to be ordained to the sacred order of the priesthood this morning. These great expectations and grand hopes link them together as well. Before examining these great expectations and grand hopes, let us take a look at who these five *ordinandi* are.

Robert Paul Johnson is the son of Doug and Patty Johnson. He is the third of four children and his home parish is Resurrection Parish in Illiopolis, Illinois. He attended Sangamon Valley High School in Niantic, Illinois, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he majored in biology with a minor in secondary education. He studied for the priesthood at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. His hobbies are spending time and traveling with friends and family, hunting, fishing, camping, the outdoors, especially the National Parks, reading, and watching movies. He describes three seeds of his vocation to the priesthood as: 1) his family 2) his Mom telling him about the life and story of Pope John Paul II when they were waiting for Mass with him when the Holy

Father was in St. Louis, and 3) his fraternity Bible Study when he was at U of I. Father Johnson will serve as Parochial Vicar at St. Boniface Parish in Edwardsville and as Chaplain of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. As a newly ordained priest, he is most looking forward to celebrating Mass, hearing confessions, and just trying to live out the Little Way as a faithful priest who desires to be a Saint and help others become Saints.

Aaron Thomas Kuhn is the son of Barbara and the late Thomas Kuhn. He is the youngest of eight children and his home parish is St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Mendon, Illinois. His oldest brother is a priest for the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and will vest him during today's Ordination Mass. He attended Quincy Notre Dame High School and Quincy University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Management and a Master's degree in Business Administration. He studied for the priesthood at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. His hobbies are writing (especially technical writing and creative writing), spending time with his family, especially at the county fair where they continue to show livestock; he also enjoys spending quiet, relaxing time with friends, exploring architecture, especially older architecture, and he is

interested in antiques. Father Kuhn will serve as Parochial Vicar at St. Peter Parish in Quincy. He says that as a newly ordained priest he is most looking forward to the celebration of the Sacraments and getting to know the people and building relationships with them so that we may all be drawn closer to Christ.

Dominic Joseph Rankin is the son of Mark and Stephanie Rankin. He says that he is the oldest of three children, since he was born three minutes before his twin sister, who is a Dominican Nun. Their home parish is St. Rose of Lima in Quincy, Illinois. He was homeschooled for grade school and high school and attended John Wood Community College. He studied for the priesthood at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and at the Pontifical North American College in Rome. His hobbies are baking, reading, sports and running. He has run two marathons, so he has only twenty-one more to catch up with his Bishop! However, his Bishop is not done running marathons yet, so it may take a few more than that before he catches up or surpasses him! After ordination, Father Rankin will return to Rome for another year to do Graduate Studies for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology of Marriage and Family at the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences, with residence at

the Pontifical North American College in Vatican City. As a newly ordained priest, he is most looking forward to hearing Confessions, doing marriage preparation and celebrating Mass for his family. He also looks forward to being with people as a new priest, saying that he has always been inspired by newly ordained men, and he hopes to pass that gift on!

Mark Adam Tracy is the son of Jim and Jil Tracy. He is the third of four children and his home parish is Holy Family Parish in Mount Sterling. He attended Brown County High School in Mount Sterling and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he majored in recreation, sport, and tourism management – subjects that will certainly be handy as a parish priest! He studied for the priesthood at Saint Meinrad Seminary in southern Indiana. His hobbies are hanging out with friends, traveling, exercising, playing sports and watching Cardinals' baseball. Well, nobody's perfect! He certainly does like to exercise, having walked across the United States twice! After ordination, Father Tracy will serve as Parochial Vicar at St. Anthony Parish, Effingham, and Annunciation Parish, Shumway. As a newly ordained priest, he is most looking forward to building up the Church (the Body of Christ) through celebrating the

sacraments with the People of God and journeying with them through the ups and downs of life.

Adam Zawadzki is the son of Jan and Paul Zawadzki. He is youngest of four children. His home parish is Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel, Indiana. He attended Cathedral High School in Indianapolis and Vincennes University, where he studied AA American Sign Language. His Bachelor of Arts degree is from Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas, concentrating in Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Theatre. He studied for the priesthood at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. His hobbies are bicycling, learning about buildings, and learning Do It Yourself projects. After ordination, Father Zawadzki will do full-time ministry with the Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf. As a newly ordained priest, he is most looking forward to offering the Sacraments directly to the Deaf Community.

As their biographical information makes clear, these are talented men with diverse interests and abilities, which is in part why we have such great expectations for them. We also have great expectations by virtue of the very nature of the sacred priesthood to which they are about to be ordained.

My dear candidates for ordination: we expect great things from you, not in the sense that we expect you to be rich, famous or powerful, but simply because the little things you will do in your everyday ministry will lead you and the people you serve to salvation and union with Christ our Lord and Savior. We expect you to celebrate Mass every day, inspire us with your homilies, pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily, administer the Sacraments, bury the dead, dedicate yourself to chaste celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, be obedient in faithfully carrying out the mission entrusted to you by your diocesan bishop, visit the sick and the homebound, teach our young people about the faith, and serve as models of missionary discipleship through your ministry as servant leaders of the People of God, just to name the most obvious expectations! In short, we expect you to be good and holy priests because all of these little ways will lead you and the people you serve to the greatest expectation of all: to be saints.

Some might scoff at the notion of striving to be saints as an unrealistic expectation. While the odds are certainly not in favor of being officially canonized as a Saint by the Pope, we are all certainly called to be saints in the most basic meaning of that term, namely, to live forever in the

presence of God in the Kingdom of Heaven. The alternative to being a saint forever in heaven is unthinkable. No one should want to go there!

Expectations are bolstered by resolutions. A student who wants to excel in academics, for example, must resolve to study hard. A person who wants to lose weight must resolve to exercise and eat in moderation. A runner who wants to finish a marathon must resolve to put in many miles of training. Expecting to be a saint and to lead others to sainthood requires resolutions as well. So immediately after my homily, I will ask you to make some resolutions. I will ask you to resolve, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge your duties as a priest faithfully, as worthy fellow workers with me and the entire College of Bishops as shepherds of the Lord's flock. I will ask you to resolve to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and teaching the Catholic faith. I will ask you to resolve to celebrate the sacraments faithfully and reverently, in accord with the Church's tradition, especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for the glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people. I will ask you to resolve to implore God's mercy upon the people entrusted to your care by observing the command to pray without ceasing. Finally, I will ask you to resolve, with the help of God, to

be united more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered Himself for us to the Father as a pure Sacrifice, and with Him to consecrate yourselves to God for the salvation of all.

I will also ask you to promise obedience to me and my successors as your diocesan bishop as a means of answering the call of your priestly vocation to fulfill the great expectations that the Church has for you in carrying out her mission wherever your ministry will be most needed in leading people to holiness.

At my priesthood ordination forty years ago in the sanctuary of the Main Chapel at Mundelein Seminary on May 10, 1978, my 28 classmates and I sang two songs as Communion Meditations and Songs of Praise. One was "Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life" by Ralph Vaughn Williams; the other was "Lord of All Hopefulness," a traditional Irish melody with lyrics by Jan Struther, and which I offer now as a prayer expressing our great expectations and grand hopes for you:

*Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,  
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares can destroy,  
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,  
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.*

*Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,  
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,  
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.*

*Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,  
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,  
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,  
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.*

*Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,  
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,  
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,  
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.*

May God give us this grace. Amen.