

**Homily for the Ordination of Christopher Trummer to the Priesthood  
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield, Illinois**

**June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brother priests and deacons, beloved consecrated men and women religious, and my lay brothers and sisters in Christ: it is *good* to be here, with you, and with Our Lord, on this glorious day. We come together today to witness and celebrate the ordination of Deacon Christopher Trummer to Christ's priesthood, a glorious occasion for all of us, and indeed for the entire Church.

For those of you who do not know Deacon Chris very well, some background information may help to get better acquainted with our soon-to-be newest priest of our diocese.

Christopher Andrew Trummer grew up in Neoga, Illinois, the son of John and Margaret – better known as “Bitsy” – Trummer. He is the second of four children, but he likes to say that he is “the middle of four” because the youngest two are twins! Chris attended Neoga High School and Lake

Land College in Mattoon. After two years of automotive technology, Chris attended Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis and the Pontifical North American College in Rome. His hobbies are reading, writing, running, cycling, traveling, listening to music and podcasts, playing music on guitar and cello. Chris describes his call to priesthood in these words:

For several years—during high school and early college—the Catholic faith was not important to me at all, and I had serious doubts about God, Jesus, and the Church. I eventually encountered Catholic apologetics through radio, podcasts, and books, and I was amazed to discover how coherent and intellectually rich our Faith is. I had an insatiable hunger to learn more about the Faith. With the loving and patient accompaniment of an exceptional priest, Fr. John Titus—especially through the Sacrament of Confession—I became a committed disciple of Christ. My life since then has never been the same—it has been a beautiful and unpredictable adventure!

My brother, Fr. Michael [who was ordained a priest just last year] and I both began discerning the priesthood and even started the application process without either of us knowing that the other was doing so. I found out that Michael was applying to seminary when I stopped by my parents' house and saw his diocesan application sitting on his desk. Thinking I had left my own application exposed (at this point I had not told all my family members yet), I picked it up and saw the name: "Michael Trummer." Somehow, this was both surprising and not surprising at all! In my experience, Divine Providence often feels that way!

Chris says that what he is most looking forward to as a newly ordained priest is helping people to receive healing and find happiness and meaning in Jesus Christ.

In a few moments Chris, you will offer your life and future into Our Lord's merciful hands, and He in turn will offer His own life and power back into your hands as His priest.

To say it that way though, somewhat reverses the actual way that God works! His gift always comes first, and *then* our response. Chris, today you *do* offer your life and future into Our Lord's merciful hands, *but* His self-gift – of the graces and promises of the priesthood – was something He already desired for you before you were conceived. As He spoke to Jeremiah – “*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you*” (Jeremiah 1:5) – so He speaks the same truth to you as well.

But this truth is actually given to every one of us! I want to return to my opening words of this homily – “we come together to witness and celebrate the ordination of Deacon Christopher Trummer to Christ's priesthood” – which *is* true, but it is *not* the only reason that we are all gathered here today. The fact is, just as Deacon Trummer was *called* by God to approach the altar today to be ordained a priest, so all of us have been

called by God to be present in this Cathedral today, not only to be encouraged by Christ's gift of priestly grace, but also to receive for ourselves the graces we need to continue faithfully in God's call to us as well.

Recently I have been enjoying the TV series called "The Chosen," now in its second season, which has profoundly and personally given a glimpse into the life of Jesus. After the first few episodes, the viewer is introduced to the wondrous character of Jesus, Whose voice pierces through the varied circumstances of person after person – Mary Magdalen, Simon, Matthew, Nicodemus – and calls them from whatever place they were in, into discipleship and relationship with Him. We already know this story from the Gospels, but this show presents so vividly how these very different, sometimes very broken, always completely un-prepared, men and women hear His voice and encounter His love, and their lives are irrevocably and utterly changed.

One scene remains fixed in my memory. Through the first episodes, we have been gradually introduced to the beloved, belligerent, beleaguered character of Simon, who owes a fortune in back taxes to the Roman authorities. Matthew, of course, the logical, dutiful, quirky tax collector, ends up right in the middle of this situation.

And then there is the amazing day when Jesus steps into Simon's boat, miraculously provides him a boatload of fish, and draws the fisherman into the wondrous life of listening and watching His Messianic work. Of course, we know what will come next: Jesus sees Matthew, sitting in his booth, and with Simon scowling at his old nemesis, Jesus calls out "Matthew, come, follow me." Despite Simon's protestations, Matthew does just that. The voice of Jesus breaks through all the din around him — and doubt within him — and Matthew begins to follow. The fisherman rebukes Jesus: "He's a sinner, a tax collector," to which Jesus wryly reminds Simon that the same is true of him. In response to Simon's muttered "that was different," Jesus grins and tells him, "Get used to different."

It is a wonderful line, even if not actually found in the Gospels. But the truth underneath this retort — "get used to different" — is one that should overwhelm all of us. The "difference" of which Jesus speaks is the fact that *God cares about the life of every single one of us*. Every soldier, tax collector, wife, pharisee, or fisherman at that time, and every student, judge, engineer, farmer, mother, father, teacher, or retiree of our own day and age. "Get used to different" is to get used to a *God that loves each of us individually, and calls*

each of us, with all the nuances of our own character and history to “come, follow me.”

My brothers and sisters, though we rightfully rejoice in the call of Christopher Trummer to the priesthood, we cannot forget that God similarly has chosen each and every one of us to a particular role in His Kingdom too! A vocation, a call – the reality that God has a plan for us – is not just for those called to be priests, or sisters, or brothers, but for *everyone*. God does not forget or leave out anyone created in His image and likeness. No! He has desires and dreams for every one of our lives, for all of our talents and idiosyncrasies, for every up or down of our heart. He does not leave our life up to us, but has a wonderful plan in mind for each one of us!

Chris, because you are being ordained today by yourself, you had the unique chance to choose all three of the readings *da solo*, as they say in Italy. Our eight men last year had to agree upon the readings they chose, but the ones proclaimed today were entirely the fruit of your own prayer and meditation. And so I turn to each of them with this reality – of God’s personal call to each of us – on my mind.

Our first encounter with God’s word today speaks of the servant of the Lord, anointed “to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind of the

brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1). These are the very words that Jesus used to describe His own ministry, and they rightly describe the vocation of a priest: to heal, to release, to comfort, to transfigure.

My beloved son, Chris, in your ministry, do not fail to draw on the graces of priesthood to bring God’s kind of joy and freedom to those in your care!

I would like, though, to direct our attention further along this direction. Isaiah speaks here of the *joy*, the good news, that God’s chosen one will bring to the world. *Every one of us has a particular way we share in God’s joy.* Some of us are natural jokesters, bubbling over with laughter, and bringing a smile to any situation. Some of us are more apt to bring joy by our generosity, compassion, or patience. Perhaps, instead, you have been given a unique ability to organize, to prepare, to host, or invite, and in that way allow God’s joy into the hearts of others. I recount all these variations because *God has called each of us to be **messengers of joy***, and perhaps one of the graces we might pray for today is to realize precisely how we might do this.

Our second reading gives us St. Paul’s magnificent words to the Corinthians on the compelling love of Christ, that calls all of us to live not

for ourselves, but for Him. Christ has died for us; can we do the same for Him? Paul focuses our attention to one particular ministry: that of *reconciliation*. Specifically, the call to be ministers and ambassadors of reconciliation. Once again, the words are perfect ones for a new priest.

Chris, my son, today you are given Christ's power to bind and loose sins. I pray that this gift of reconciliation will be one that you can offer countless souls in confession.

But this invitation is given to all of us in a certain way: to be *ministers of reconciliation*, not only in hearing confessions and absolving sins, but also in allowing our own hearts to be reconciled with God, and then, with that grace given to us, looking for the particular way He invites us to witness His reconciliation in the world.

What is "different" about Jesus? *Only Jesus offers forgiveness of our sins.* Every other church, cult, leader, or philosophy can offer only quick-fixes and comforting counsel; only Jesus offers true *reconciliation*. Then, having received that gift ourselves, how can we pass it on? Perhaps we can do so by reconciling with an estranged friend, or reaching out in mercy to someone who has hurt us. Perhaps it is by intercession on behalf of divided family members or situations of pain and ugliness in our world today. Maybe it is

simply to be patient in an impatient world, or hopeful in the face of a bleak situation. All of us have been offered reconciliation: have we received it fully? Have we passed it on?

Finally, we turn to the Gospel. John records for us the intimate prayer of Jesus to His Father before His passion: "*As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth*" (John 17:19). Once again, the words are perfectly offered to you, Chris, on this day of your ordination. The name your mom and dad gave you, *Christopher*, Christ-bearer, already points to another part of your role as a priest: to be sent into the world bearing Christ, bearing His truth, bearing witness to Who He is. At every Mass you will do this both in your preaching and in your offering of the Eucharist, but you are called today to witness to this truth in *all* your actions and choices as well. Do not fear, the graces of the sacrament of the priesthood will allow you to do this faithfully!

Once again, these words are not just meant for the soon-to-be-ordained, they are part of Christ's *call* to every one of us. We are all called not just to be messengers of joy and ministers of reconciliation, but also **incarnations of Christ's Truth**. The "different" that Jesus brings is a personal invitation to each of us to be changed and transfigured *by His Truth*. This

does not take anything away from who we are, and the personality and personal gifts He has given to each of us; actually it upholds and enhances those gifts by elevating them with grace and enlisting them for the Gospel. We live in a world that sees truth as personal, changeable, subjective . . . but our lives cannot be captured or sustained by such weak preferences. No, it is the Truth of Christ, of His love, of His call, of His concern for each of us that can actually captivate us entirely and complete in us His joy. I ask everyone here: how can we take up this Truth more fully in our own hearts? How can we carry it to a world starving for it?

Much more could be said about God's call to each of us - specifically today to be messengers of joy, ministers of reconciliation, and incarnations of His truth, but perhaps one final thought fittingly concludes our meditation today. We are gathered here in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on this feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is not a coincidence that Mary's pure heart was filled with the joy of the Lord, and was a bearer of His reconciliation and truth to the world. Mary was not a priest, but she offers all of us a splendid example of God's call to each of us to carry His gifts and presence to the world.

When I was a seminarian singing in the choir at Mundelein Seminary, a hymn we often sang at ordination was “The Call,” which sums up the message of heeding Our Lord’s unique call for each one of us to follow Him.

*How brightly deep! How glory sprung! Creation’s Lord unbound.  
The reaching, longing heart of things in charged, unspoken sound.  
Its urgent peace the rocks, the roots, the winds, the sea had found.  
But man would touch the spoken Word, would walk with Him his ground.*

*Leave all things you have and come and follow me, and come and follow me.*

*That Christed moment has no end. Its movement breathless bright.  
Has drenched our earth in silent spills of crashing bursting light.  
And man will search its muffled rays through stone and wood and night,  
Will reach the Presence who has called, who slowly freed his sight.*

*Leave all things you have and come and follow me, and come and follow me.<sup>1</sup>*

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> This hymn about discipleship, published as *The Call*, was written by Sister of Mercy Suzanne Toolan, RSM (b 1927), with text from *How Brightly Deep* by Rosemary O’Sullivan (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 1970).