



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



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HOMILY FOR THE DIACONATE ORDINATION OF MICHAEL GERARD MOLONEY,
JUSTUS ODIRA ALAETO, AND LOUIS MATTHEW SHEA

NOVEMBER 19, 2011
SACRED HEART SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN

MICHAEL, JUSTUS, AND LOUIS,

A prayer and hymn that is often prayed or sung at Mass is “This is the Day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad!” I believe we can say that is our prayer today for you: we who are your family and friends, who pray for you this day, when in your journey to priestly ministry, you take an important step—ordination to the Diaconate. In this step of this journey, you are being called by the Word of God, as the opening hymn says to build up the communion of the local Church in the ministry of the Word and Service.

This journey has been shaped and forged by the Providence of God, who has called you through the lives of your families, friends, decisions you have made, and your classmates and professors who have journeyed with you to this day. Coming from different parts of the world and different local Churches [Justus from Nigeria to Portland, Oregon; Michael from Ireland to the “Wild West” in Fort Worth; and Louis, from family roots in Decatur, Illinois where I was pastor for nine years] you are united here in the YES to the Diaconate.

A hymn that marked seminary life at the time of my classes’ ordination to the Diaconate was “Sing a new Song” [frankly, we “sang that song” to death at the time!!!]. Yet, there is a great truth proclaimed in that hymn of the St. Louis Jesuits!!! Soon the Church herself, in the English language countries will “Sing a new Song”. And, from this day forward, your lives must “Sing a new Song” even if you don’t think you can carry a tune!! And that song is the the voice of the Living God that your ministry will reflect in your proclamation of the Word of God, by taking that Word with you in love and service, in all expected and unexpected moments of ministry. This day, you, as the Book of Numbers proclaims you are “set aside” but also “sent” so that the Voice of the Living God may be heard by his people in joy and in sorrow, and you never know when that will be. Like the 72 in the Gospel, you are sent by the Lord Himself from this day forward. And, you never know where that will take you, but believe, indeed that it will be where the Word of God needs to be spoken, and a new song needs to be sung.

Right after I was ordained a deacon, in my first assignment which was in the summer, the pastor said “I want you to preach this funeral...it is the tragedy of someone who has taken his life” Not many months after that, I was called to be at the bedside of a high school classmate of mine, to be with him, as he had to take his

wife off of life support a month after their second child was born. The Sunday after, I baptized that child. In each of those unplanned settings, I had been sent somehow, by the Lord, so that His voice, His song, could console and lift up the broken hearted, and yet sing the song of new life and eternal life! Similar moments await you, I promise!

But to be the bearers of that song, you also must be hearers of that song, in your own time of prayer, the prayer of the Church and your own prayer, “Beloved, be serious so that you will be able to pray...says St. Peter.” The Word of God must always dwell with you, daily, so that you can meet the Lord, and He can show you to whom the voice of God must speak. Chiara Lubich, who founded the Focolare movement, commenting on this month of November, said “Will we be ready to meet him? Will our lamps be lit...will we be loving? Or will our lamps be extinguished because we are so taken up with the many things to do, the fleeing joys, the possession of material goods, that we forget the one thing necessary: to love?” Will you take the Word of God with you daily, so that you can preach and you can love, and sing that new song to those so much in need of the presence of God?

As the Church readies herself to Sing a new Song, not only of a new translation, but a new year, she calls you in your Yes to the Lord, to Sing a new song of your lives by this YES today.

The last day of the Church’s year, the Saturday of the 34th week in Ordinary Time, finds St. Augustine calling you to do just that in the Office of Readings for the Liturgy of the Hours:

“Let us sing alleluia here on earth, while we still live in anxiety, so that we may sing is one day in heaven and in full security....Even here amidst trials and temptations, let us all sing alleluia...Sing my brothers...sing, but keep going...Keep on making progress...in virtue, true faith and right living...Sing then, but keep going...”

Michael, Justus, and Louis ...keep going...”go on your way” as the 72 were sent by the Lord Jesus you are sent to lives of service and love, but with the promise of the “Strength that God supplies” to go out into all the world and tell the Good News.” And we, also, are on the journey with you, so that this new song of your lives is not just a solo, but rather a consistent refrain of love in that chorus of praise of all God’s Holy People.

God bless you always.

AMEN, ALLELUIA!!

+ Most Reverend Bishop Kevin Vann