



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

Ordination Charge to the Priests Peter-tide 2022

There's a bit of a party going on at Glastonbury this weekend! We may not be there but if I throw my windows open tonight, I suspect I will hear the strains of Billie Eilish from the Pyramid stage. I am sure you are going to match those celebrations with your own this weekend. Your ordination as a deacon was somewhat muted due to Covid restrictions. This year we can have more of your family and friends join you... if the rail strikes allow!

It has been good to hear about what has made your heart sing this past year. It hasn't always been straightforward, there has certainly been pain and struggle, and yet as I have met with each of you, I have heard stories of growing confidence and a sense that you have discovered more of God's heart for you.

Last year in my ordination Charge I reminded you of words from the ordinal...

"Deacons are to be faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us."

And I spoke about this being 'an attitude, a charism, a way of being', that prayer is at the heart of all we do. And I added this:

'As we enter into a conversation with God, with its silences as well as its words, so we discover more of his heart and see through his eyes. And that is when the kingdom is revealed!'

Over these last few days of retreat, you have been hearing from Howard something of how the apostle Paul handed on the mantle of responsibility to Timothy. Timothy the young rookie who journeyed with Paul and served the church in Thessalonica and Ephesus. They held each other in affection and Paul could see in Timothy the makings of a pastor and leader despite also being a man whose weaknesses were as evident as his strengths. None of us comes fully formed! There's always more to learn.

We can hear the echoes of Paul's words to Timothy in this year's diocesan 'Dwelling' passage from Philippians. It encourages us all to keep reflecting, keep listening and learning, and thus noticing God's presence with us.

*'Finally, **beloved**, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.'*

Philippians 4: 8-9



As you take on the role of priest, please remember that your identity is not to be found in a stole rearranged, sacraments you can now offer, but rather the deepening understanding that you are a child of God. It doesn't require you to be perfect but rather to be truly yourself, seeking to be continually formed into the human being God has made and called, and who authentically reflects the image of Christ.

You know already that ministry is far from straightforward or easy. Knowing ourselves to be **Beloved** will help us to receive the peace of Christ, stilling our own anxieties, and giving us the presence of His power to transform. Pausing to reflect on the things in life which are good and of real value, and then holding on to what we know to be true of God will restore our peace.

Personally, I have found the Ignatian practice of the Examen has been so helpful for me in this. Recognising at the end of each day those things for which I am thankful and noticing too those for which I am less than thankful. Leaving the latter in God's hands and returning my thanks to Him for His love. It heightens my awareness that I am **Beloved**.

And as a priest, then I have found the offering of the Eucharist, the proclaiming of the Thanksgiving prayer as we break bread, have helped me to be grateful for all we are as Church, the brokenness as well as the beauty. Something you may find helpful as I have over the years is this. Having shared some particularly distressing and painful ministry situation with my Spiritual Director one day, he advised me to write the name of the person concerned on a piece of paper and slip it under the cloth on the altar. As I blessed and broke the bread that Sunday, I was aware that I did so on behalf of that person whose situation only God and I were aware of. Blessing and breaking, I remembered that we were both **Beloved**.

'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.'

Philippians 4: 4-7

Sisters and brothers, may your joy spill over, and may God's peace rule in your hearts and minds as you come to offer yourselves as priests in the Church of God. **Be loved!**

+ Ruth

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