

Homily
Diaconate Ordination
Ryan Andrew
Diocese of Des Moines
December 22, 2017

We gather in the waning moments of Advent, to celebrate the ordination to the transitional diaconate of our brother and friend, Ryan Andrew.

The focus of the liturgical cycle rests squarely on Mary, the Virgin. Her discernment of the vocation God was calling her to was filled with question, anxious concern, doubt and wonderment. But in the end, she landed on the realization that this was fully God's design. In perceptive understanding she recognized that all was to be accomplished through God's instrumentality and his power. Indeed, she was blessed. Her ruminations gave way to rejoicing in God's initiative. "My spirit rejoices in God, My Savior."

In the tradition of Mary, like all called for a specific vocation by God, Ryan Andrew has expressed questioning, feelings of unworthiness, an inevitable sense of a lack of readiness. Finally, he had to acknowledge this is God's doing. It calls for a response that is trusting. After all, God knows what he is about. Ultimately, the reply God is awaiting has come forth from Mary's lips "Be it done unto me, according to thy word." Without being presumptuous or self-centered we know God will take care of the rest. Thus, Ryan provides for us the encouragement to carry on in the pattern of Mary.

Two particular dimensions eventuate in Mary's role that are applicable to Ryan as he embraces the identity of deacon.

The first is hope. In accepting God's Will, it is necessary to move beyond the horizon of the present. With the evil, the greed, the selfishness and injustice, war, painful suffering, violence, natural disasters, etc., one could very well give in to desperation. All is black. All is empty.

But hearing God's word and acting upon it, seeing the love which is possible in God's using his chosen ones open windows to light. God's love and truth will prevail. Our hearts resonate with that conviction as we ponder Mary's response and repeated by Ryan and others similar to him and accept the call to allow God to work through us.

The second dimension of Mary's vocation is that in anticipation of her Son, Jesus, she is called to be servant. She proclaims, "Behold, I am the handmade of the Lord."

The origin of the diaconate occurred within the early Church as the members grappled with various needs of the emerging community, as recounted in the 2nd reading. In this case, the needs were radically practical, providing for the daily distribution of food to the widows of Hellenistic background. The inspiration for such a task was the vivid memory of Jesus washing the feet of the Apostles, "What I have done for you, you must do for one another."

As Ryan embraces the indelible character of the diaconate, he recognizes that being an agent of hope and a humble servant will remain intact as he progresses to the intended ordination of priest.

As we join you on this Advent evening, Ryan, we feel genuine gratitude for the encouragement your witness stimulates.

As God's priestly people, with you we embrace more fervently our vocation as the Body of Christ to seed hope among all God's children, namely our sisters and brothers in the human family, and in so doing perpetuate the servanthood of Jesus.