

# Diaconal Ordination of Rev Daniel Etienne, Oscott College

Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 2016



The angel Gabriel addressed Mary as 'highly favoured', or as we pray in the Hail Mary, 'full of grace.' We might say that the hand of God rested on Mary's shoulder in a very unique way, so unique that she was full of grace and, as today's feast celebrates, she was in fact conceived without that original sin which affects the rest of us. In liturgical language, she was the perfect vessel to bear the Son of the Most High. God had indeed prepared Mary in a mysterious way for her role in the story of our salvation.

Yet there was surely a human preparation which allowed her to say in response to the angel, *I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me*, (Lk 1:38). Her upbringing and background as a daughter of Israel, with the rich religious history which that entails, the influence of her family and local community centred on the synagogue, together with God's grace, helped prepare her for that moment of decision and the embrace of her life's vocation as the Lord's handmaid or servant.

As you present yourself for the Order of Deacon this evening, Daniel, as Bishop I would like to acknowledge and thank all who have a hand in enabling you to arrive at this point in your life: your parents and family, the two seminaries where you have been formed, the English College, Rome, and the rector and staff here at St. Mary's Oscott, the many friends who have supported you along the road, in good times and in bad. A vocation coming to fruition may be compared to a mosaic, whose many parts contribute to the whole. May God bless abundantly all those who have made today possible!

Mary declared herself to be the handmaid of the Lord, and the strong Greek word is noteworthy here, for it means slave or servant-girl. Our Lady was going to be devoted totally to the service of Lord, and of course to his people. Daniel, you will be marked for life as a deacon, like Mary a servant at the disposal of others. In a real sense from now on your life won't be your own. One of the most moving scenes in the gospel is the Last Supper setting, recorded by the Evangelist Luke (Lk 22:24-27). At this most critical moment we find the disciples arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest (how wide off the mark can you be!). The Lord proceeded to instruct them that in his kingdom true greatness meant being a servant, and added that he stood among them as a diakonos, as one who serves, and we know where his diaconate ministry would lead him.

Daniel, keep always the example of Christ the deacon before your eyes. Central to your ministry will be the proclamation of the gospel in the assembly of the Church. Be yourself both a hearer and a doer of that word, and so deserve to hear one day the words of the Lord: *Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord.* Amen!

+Michael G Campbell OSA  
Bishop of Lancaster

8 December 2016