

HOMILY
ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER PROWSE
CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN
FRIDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2018
ST CHRISTOPHER'S CATHEDRAL
ORDINATION NAMORA ANDERSON AND ADRIAN CHAN

Readings

Isaiah 61:1-3

1 Peter 5:1-4

Gospel: John 20:19-23

We welcome most particularly our dear brothers Adrian Chan and Namora Anderson and their families, friends and parishioners and the wider Archdiocese to this very important Liturgical event in the life and history of the Archdiocese.

In a most particular way, I welcome those who have come from overseas. Clearly, in doing that I welcome Adrian Chan's parents, extended family, and friends who have come in considerable numbers to be with us tonight. You are welcome!

We have accompanied now for quite some years both Adrian and Namora and have co-discerned with them that we believe that God is indeed calling them to the great gift of the Priesthood. In sharing this important Sacrament of Holy Orders we assure them that we have been, are and will be walking with them in the many long years of their Priesthood, which, please God, they will be given to serve God's people.

As the Archbishop of the Archdiocese it is of incredible joy for me to be able to celebrate the ordination of two of my Deacons at the same time. For this Archdiocese it is quite an unusual occurrence for which we are most grateful to the Lord.

After their ordination and placement in Parishes, it won't be long before they are joining me, as two of our Priest Chaplains with the young people in this Year of Youth, to World Youth Day in Panama at the end of January in 2019. We will join Pope Francis in a great celebration of the Catholic youth of the world. I am so pleased to see a growing and vibrant Youth Apostolate in this Archdiocese and now we are seeing some of the fruits of it with the ordination of these two wonderful men.

Whilst referring to World Youth Day, I recall World Youth Day (August 2011), in Madrid, Spain.

I had arrived earlier at the Sacristy to celebrate Mass on one of the weekdays of World Youth Day. There were Masses celebrated all over the city and I chose one with the delegation I was with. When I went to the Sacristy the celebrant of the Mass was already there as well. For a period of time there was only the two of us there and we sat down and had a good chat while we waited. I hadn't met this man

before but I had heard of him and was most impressed with him in all that he had to say.

It was Cardinal Francis George (1937-2015) the former Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago USA.

Cardinal Francis George was well respected as a marvellous pastoral Bishop. He gave a very important Homily to his Diocese about the way the Catholic Church is now situated in the developed west. I'd like to quote him because I think it does set the context for exercising of the Priesthood particularly in today's Australian world.

Cardinal George said the following "I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilisation, as the church has done so often in human history." Is this portrayal of the context in which we now exercise Priestly ministry an exaggeration? Is it too pessimistic and dramatic? Maybe, maybe not! The world in which both Adrian and Namora will exercise their ministry is certainly different than the world of even a few years ago.

For example, who would have thought that we would be dealing with life issues for example, Euthanasia and issues pertaining to the State's intrusion into our Sacramental system as we are now.

The cultural context today in Australia is most certainly observing a creeping totalitarianism of the State into the world of Religion here in this fair country of Australia.

Yet, that is the world of today.

So into this rather different world we evangelise and place the eternal message of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Both Adrian and Namora will make their contribution in the Presbyteral Order.

Adrian Chan first thought about being a Diocesan Priest at the age of fifteen.

This was especially triggered by the affect that his bed ridden maternal Grandmother had on his life. Her response to suffering assisted him to think about the bigger issues of life.

Having come from a family of four in Singapore, he attended Catholic schools for his primary and secondary education. He then was at the University of Singapore and studied Political Sciences. For ten years he joined the Discalced Carmelites and studied both in Singapore and in Rome. Yet he felt there was a deeper calling within this vocation.

By a set of God given coincidences he was attracted to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn by several means. One of them was by the encouragement of his spiritual director over many years Fr Tom Curran. This wonderful Priest was also known by our other Singaporean Priest, Fr Michael Lim. We are thinking of making Fr Curran an honorary member of the Archdiocese for giving us two Priests now!

For our dear brother Adrian we pray particularly tonight through the intercession of his favourite Carmelite Saint – St Teresa of Avila. He has learnt so much from her life.

Adrian particularly is attracted to her sense of humour, to her gift of Church governance, to her pastoral ministry and being in touch with people at the level of their deepest spiritual needs.

In regard to our dear brother Namora Anderson, although not meeting him at Madrid in 2011, he was there. The World Youth Day experience had a very maturing effect on his call to the Priesthood as indeed his pastoral placement at Port Lincoln in the Diocese of Port Pirie.

Namora is one of our locals.

He comes from Queanbeyan and Jerrabomberra. His primary and secondary education was at the Charles Conder Primary School and Karabar High school. There doesn't seem to be much systematic Catholic education here!

Namora grew up with people from his suburb who were often perceived as living life where "the rubber meets the road"! Even at an early age, he was interested in voluntary work. He spent a lot of his youth involved in volunteer work at the Salvation Army, the Sisters of Charity Queanbeyan, and other hobby groups such as the Australian Historical Railway Society and the Queanbeyan Road Safety Group.

Over the years he has enjoyed music and fixing cars, and showing more than passing interest in soccer.

He was baptised by Fr Bill Kennedy on the 5th of March 1989 in Kambah and was confirmed at Queanbeyan by Fr. Mark Croker in the year 2000.

He most certainly is a local lad. His years at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, welcome and thanks to Fr Danny Meagher and his staff from the Seminary, indicate a maturation of his personality at all levels and a growing confidence that God is calling him to the Priesthood. We are confident that is God's call for him as we stand alongside him and pledge both Namora and Adrian our accompaniment through what we hope will be very happy years in the Priesthood.

Could I move towards the conclusion of my Homily by offering a popular expression by another American. This is not Cardinal George but the well-known Mother Angelica who founded the global Catholic television station EWTN.

One of her favourite little expressions is the following "When you are prepared to do the ridiculous, God is ready to do the miraculous." Given the world that we are now in and the incredible scrutiny that the Priesthood here in Australia has been subjected to over many years now, I suppose many of Adrian and Namora's contemporaries might find that what they are doing tonight is quite ridiculous.

We are in a world where it is all about the "here and now": We are in a scientific world and "the body beautiful" and "money, money, money" and doing everything "My Way," as Frank Sinatra sang, seems to be the predominant mantra of today. To many, the idea of opening one's life up to divine mystery and total service of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus seems to be, indeed, a "ridiculous" way of disposing of one's life.

But our wisdom is deeper than what superficiality offers. Today's scripture offers us a deeper wisdom that when we become slaves for Christ we activate the deepest freedom we possibly can.

In regard to the scriptures of tonight we have many examples of what Christian slavery really means.

St Peter indicates in the Second Reading that we are always to be "Shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow."

The role of all the baptised but particularly the role of the ministerial Priest is to "proclaim the liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord", as the First Reading indicates.

The ministerial Priest does this particularly by the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is a call to conversion and leading God's people in the Sacraments. Then God is ready to do the miraculous through us.

Above all, the Priest is to remember that to do the miraculous works of God there must be complete surrender of all one's life to the liberating power of God working through us in the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we pray most sincerely in this Priesthood ordination that our dear brothers Namora and Adrian indeed receive deeply the words that Jesus spoke to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost when he said in tonight's Gospel, "Peace be with you...as the Father sent me so am I sending you."