

Homily for the Ordination to the Diaconate
Brother Joseph Van Tu Nguyen OSA
5 July 2024

My dear Augustinian brothers, my sisters and brothers in Christ, this evening, we gather to celebrate a sacred and joyous occasion for the Church: the ordination to the diaconate of Brother Tu, a devoted member of the Religious Order of Saint Augustine. We are graced by his commitment and readiness to serve the Lord in God's Holy Church.

The Scriptures we reflect upon today provide profound insights into the journey of all the baptised, and in a unique way for the mission that Brother Tu is about to undertake.

In the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, we hear the Lord's intimate words: "*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you came to birth, I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations*" (Jeremiah 1:5).

Brother Tu, this divine calling echoes in your life today. God has seen your heart and has chosen you for this ministry. He has brought you to this moment, and you now stand here, prepared to be consecrated for the Church's ministry, to serve as a beacon of God's love and truth.

Saint Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians urges to "*live a life worthy of your vocation*" (Ephesians 4:1). Like Jeremiah, the Apostle addresses the whole community of the Church. However, my dear Brother Tu, in choosing this text for your ordination, you demonstrate your resolve to be consecrated for the Church's ministry, which is a testament to your dedication.

You are called to hold fast to the mystery of faith, by proclaiming the Word of God in the Gospel. Through the sacrament of holy Orders, your life will be a testament to the transformative power of God's Word, guiding others towards the light of Christ.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus teaches us about the true nature of greatness in the Kingdom of heaven: "*Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your servant — just as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:26-28).

Brother Tu, your diaconal ministry will be marked by service, especially the service of the poor, the underprivileged, and those members of the community who are on the margins of the Church or society.

You are to be a man of prayer, interceding for the Church and the world. Your prayers and your service will bring the presence of Christ to those you encounter, embodying the humility and love that Christ himself showed.

The Rule of Saint Augustine, which you have embraced, calls you to live a life of unity and love within your community. The opening versus of the Rule are very clear: *“Before all else, dear brothers, love God and then your neighbour, because these are the chief commandments given to us”* (Rule of Saint Augustine).

This exhortation is not merely something to be lived between your brothers in community, rather, it informs and directs the manner in which you will be of service to the whole Body of Christ. Love is God’s gift to you and love will be your gift in return to God.

Your dedication to a life of chaste celibacy for the service of God and humanity is a powerful sign of the Kingdom of heaven. Your vow of chastity and your promise of celibacy are not just a personal commitment, but a witness to the eternal love and fidelity of God. A life of chaste celibacy allows you to serve with an undivided heart, fully devoted to the communion of Christ and the mission of His Church.

Saint Augustine, in his Confessions, speaks of the call to serve: *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”*

Brother Tu, your call to serve is a response to this divine restlessness, a desire to find rest and purpose in the Lord’s work. Your ministry will be a journey of finding and offering this divine rest to others, leading them to the peace that only God can provide.

And so, dear Tu, as you stand before us today, let your resolve be firm. Be consecrated for the Church’s ministry with joy and dedication. Hold fast to the mystery of faith, proclaiming the Word of God with passion and fidelity. Be a man of prayer, lifting up the needs of the Church and the world. Embrace your life of chaste celibacy as a sign of the Kingdom of heaven, pointing to the eternal life we all hope for.

May the Holy Spirit, who has brought you to this moment, fill you with His grace and strength. May you find joy in your service, peace in your prayers, and fulfillment in your dedication to Christ and His Church.

And may the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Saint Augustine, and all the saints accompany you on this blessed path. Amen.