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Transitional deacons' ordination marks path to priesthood

Tanya Watterud

The first reading for the June 4 ordination Mass, from Isaiah 6:1-8, ended with the words, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' 'Here I am,' I said, 'Send me!'"

The words seemed to reflect the hearts of the three men — Gregory Haman, Daniel Musgrave and Reese Weber — waiting in prayer to be ordained transitional deacons. The ordination would mark a final step in their formation for the priesthood, and they appeared ready to echo, "Here I am. Send me!"

The responsorial psalm reinforced the mission that stood before them: "Go out to all the world and tell the Good News." As the Mass at Sts. Anne and Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo continued, they heard the words of Jesus in John 15:9-17, words that provide the road map for their vocation:

"If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."

Bishop Samuel Aquila reflected on the Gospel in his homily. "Human joy at times is a struggle and yet when it is grounded in Jesus, even in the midst of great suffering and struggle, there still can be that joy," he said.

"[Jesus] lays down his life not only for his friends but also his enemies, those who directly oppose him," he said. That reminds people, and especially the deacons being ordained that day, that their lives must be a total self gift to God.

"My dearest sons, I remind you today of that gift of self that you are making. There may be some hesitation, some doubt on a human level in making that gift today," and there will be a process of purification throughout the years, Bishop Aquila said, noting his own 35 years of priesthood. "It is an ongoing gift, a gift that will be nourished in the Eucharist, a gift that will be nourished in your gift of celibacy for Christ and the Church."

In the first reading, Bishop Aquila noted that Isaiah was afraid when he saw the Lord. "It is not with great joy that he accepts his call, but he is aware of his unworthiness," he said. "One can taste his fear, his anxiety, and yet it is the Lord . . . who strengthens, purifies. He is the one who acts. He is the one who initiates. He is the one who cleanses."

During the ordination Mass, Father Kurtis Gunwall, vocation director, presented the men to the bishop and each of them was questioned about his willingness to be ordained and serve as a deacon. They promised respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors before the faithful prayed for them while the ordinands lay prostrate in front of the altar.

Bishop Aquila then ordained them through the laying on of hands and prayer of ordination. They received their stoles and dalmatics, signs of the office of deacons, and the bishop prayed for them with the Book of the Gospels, emphasizing their responsibility to share the Word of God with others.

- Deacon Haman is from New Rockford, the son of Edwin Haman and JoAnn Gaffrey. He has studied at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., and Cardinal Muench Seminary in Fargo, and is assigned to Holy Family parish in Grand Forks this summer.
- Deacon Musgrave is from Valley City, the son of Tom and Colleen Musgrave. He has also studied at Mount St. Mary's and Cardinal Muench seminaries. He is assigned to St. Therese the Little Flower parish in Rugby this summer.
- Deacon Weber is from Wahpeton and is the son of Tom and Darlyn Weber. He studied at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Denver, and Cardinal Muench Seminary. He is assigned to St. Catherine's parish in Valley City this summer.