

## Reflections of the journey to Ordination

Two new permanent Deacons ordained for the Diocese of Parramatta on October 21, 2017 have reflected on their path to Ordination. Rudy Rupac and his wife Agnes and Jerome Emmanuel and his wife Freeda were the focus of the celebration at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta. They shared their thoughts on the path to Ordination and how they experienced the big day:

### Deacon Rudy Rupac



Rev. Deacon Rudy and Agnes

When God called me to become a Permanent Deacon, I have come to realize and believe that He has already been preparing me long before my acceptance of His invitation to serve. My formation to become a Permanent Deacon therefore includes my life-long preparation that God has laid down for me. Those 'ups' and 'downs' in life, the adventures of younger years, my studies, my wife and family, work, friends, relatives, parish communities and groups, all those 'smooth' and 'rough roads' are all part of who I am and have become today.

After having been installed as a candidate for the Diaconate in 2016, I constantly asked

myself the questions, (and I thank God for giving me the humility to always examine myself) 'Am I worthy to be of service to God and his Church?', 'Am I fit and knowledgeable to serve?', 'Is my faith stronger and my patience longer enough to withstand the formation? Do I respect life and see God's image in others?'. I thank God for having given me the gifts and fruits of His Spirit for all my needs and potentials for service to be able to witness to his Word, his love and mercy. I finally realized that these gifts and fruits, if fully accepted and used, are more than enough to sustain and confidently strengthen me in my intellectual, moral and spiritual formation. All baptised persons are actually offered and bestowed the same graces for their respective journeys through life.

During the last five years of formation, I find the Diaconate Monthly Regular Sessions and Two -Yearly Retreats of Deacons, Deacons-to be and Wives most vital and helpful in our formation process. During these meetings, I have become more aware of the current issues and challenges confronting not only the Church but the fast-changing world. I think those lively discussions on the duties of deacon always pointed to the needs of lively faith and deeper spirituality to counter today's growing materialistic world. These meetings have become enlightening moments for us who are travelling together in preparing for this sacred ministry. My 14-month pastoral placement as a Candidate for the Diaconate at St. Patrick's Parramatta Cathedral was a very fruitful experience. I greatly value this exposure in the Cathedral which enhanced my appreciation of liturgical services in various forms. My weekly visits to the Marian Nursing Home, my attendance to regular RCIA Meetings and dealings with various religious groups of the Cathedral Parish have built my confidence to better associate and relate to others personally and in groups. This was where I started to feel both the trials and joy of conveying God's words to people especially to those who are in need.



# National Association of Deacons

There is no doubt, the year 2017 is so far, the biggest year for me and my family. The more than five years of anxiously waiting suddenly evaporated and replaced by the grace-full joy of my Ordination as a Permanent Deacon of the Diocese of Parramatta last 21 October 2017. The seemingly disconnected processional liturgical rehearsals all ended up to become a meaningful and faultless liturgy on the ordination day. Everyone was unanimous in praising and thanking God and the solemn presence of His Holy Spirit to this wonderful celebration of the Ordination Mass. The Bishop of Parramatta, the Most Reverend Vincent Van Long officiated the Ordination Mass together with about 15 priests in con-celebration and eight deacons serving. This was indeed a truly great day for me, my wife and my family to always remember and be grateful to God for the rest of our lives.

On that day, It was likewise heartening to have received my appointment to assist at St John XXIII Parish of Glenwood-Stanhope Gardens effective from the very day of my ordination. My wife, Agnes and myself will always consider this grace of ordination as a joint venture of marriage for the greater glory and service to God and His people.

## Deacon Jerome Emmanuel



Rev. Deacon Jerome and Freeda

It was October 21st, 2017 as the Bishop laid on his hands upon my head in silence, followed by the prayer of ordination, the greatest joy enveloped my whole being – the solemn words, “.....Send forth upon them, Lord, we pray, the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace for the faithful carrying out of the work of the ministry...” still echoes in my mind, reminding me of my responsibility as “Called and Chosen”.

I am the third in the family of five children, and I was brought up in a strong Catholic faith with my uncles and aunts as Priests and religious nuns. I had a great desire to become a Priest when I was very young and when the time came for serious discussion with my parents seeking permission to enter the minor seminary, my father, in his wisdom, declined my request, but suggested that he may consider after completing my High School Education, if I so wish. Midway my High School studies, my father passed away, and my thoughts of entering the seminary faded into oblivion, partly driven by the fact that in those days most women stayed at home to look after the children, and my mother had to pawn her jewels to look after us until such time she began to receive Widows and Orphans’ pension after one year. There were times my mother used to spend all day in the Church in prayer, and I have accompanied her many times, but with teenage reluctance. I can now clearly see the merits that it has bestowed on her children.

Fast forward to late forties, the process of discernment to the ministry of Diaconate began about fifteen years ago when one of the Friars asked me to consider joining the ministry of Acolyte. It was a heartfelt “Yes” from the bottom of my heart, and the process of interior transformation started to gather momentum. Having made enquiries about the ministry of Permanent Diaconate, I enrolled in “Certificate of Pastoral Formation” course which was a prerequisite for Ministry in the Church. Having completed the course in 2011, my wife and I had a meeting with Very Reverend Chris De Souza who accepted us into the program in 2012. My wife and I are married for thirty-three years and blessed two boys.



## National Association of Deacons

The formation process was well structured, which focused on four pillars namely, Personal, Spiritual, Theological and Ministerial with each part interwoven with the other to make the person the living sign of the servanthood of the Holy Catholic Church and make one worthy to serve at the Altar, Word and Charity. The formation journey together with my wife was fruitful.

Having completed the requirements under the programme, I was admitted to Candidacy on the 11th December 2016, attended by my family and friends. Having completed my placement at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, followed by five days 'Silent Retreat' at the Benedictine Monastery at Arcadia, and with the recommendation from the members of the diaconate panel, I was ordained to the Office of Permanent Diaconate on 21st October 2017, with my wife and two Sons at my side supported by my brothers, one of whom travelled from Quebec

(Canada) and my sister from United Kingdom, brother deacons and their wives, deacons and seminarians in formation, my parish community, relatives and friends. The days leading to the date of ordination were filled with an indescribable sense of awe and humility. The Solemn Ritual Mass of Ordination began with clouds of incense wafting through the air with the majestic voice of the cantor singing 'Alleluia, Sing to Jesus' reverberated throughout the Cathedral. The solemn celebration was so beautiful and grace-filled that it will remain firmly etched in our (my wife and I) memory.

*The journey to the deep end has just begun, and I am not alone in this journey.*

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