

WELCOME

I am delighted to welcome you to the Immaculate Conception Church today for the ordination of our friend Nick St John as deacon. I think the last ordination to take place in this church was of Deacon Dale Roberts in 2005.

Today I welcome especially Clare, together with Nick's mother Teresa, his children Tom and Charlotte and his three brothers Andrew, Phil and Robert. Phil has made the long journey from Perth in western Australia to be here today.

Among Nick's many friends a special welcome to Canon Robert Plourde from Pinner in the Archdiocese of Westminster. Canon Robert married Clare and Nick and is a longstanding friend of their family. I also welcome Fr Paul Martin, Fr Pat Armstrong, Fr Paul Lester, Fr Harry Curtis and Nick's many deacon friends.

The presence of so many ecumenical friends today indicates Nick's commitment to praying and working for the unity of the Church. I want to welcome the Rev Verena Breed, Team Rector of Bicester and Chris Clayton, in formation for ministry in the Church of England at Cuddesdon College and working at St Edburg's.

Welcome to the Rev Jeff Lothamer, Minister of Journey Communities, pastor Dennis Niziol, Senior Pastor at Elim Lighthouse, Pastor Emmanuel Obeng from Zion Way Ministries, Pentecostal Pastor James Laide, and Captain Debbie Pearson from Bicester Salvation Army. Thank you for your ministries and for your witness and friendship today.

I am grateful for the presence of Fr Harry Curtis, the Director of the Permanent Diaconate, and the Deacons' leadership team. My thanks to the representatives of St Mary's College, Oscott – I know how much Nick and Clare have appreciated the teaching and formation you have offered.

I want to thank Canon John Batthula, Fr Linh, Deacon Michael and all the parishioners of Immaculate Conception for your welcome to all of us today. This is my first opportunity to congratulate Canon John on his appointment to the Metropolitan Chapter of St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham – even though he hasn't been quite canonised yet!

Finally, Nick, I know that this weekend holds a particular poignancy for yourself and your mother Teresa, together with Clare and all your family. Tomorrow is the third anniversary of your father Michael who died in 2014. He is close to us in today's Mass through the communion of the saints and while we pray for the repose of his soul we also know that he is praying for you as you are ordained deacon.