

**Homily for the Ordination of
Charles Delano and Ryan Kehoe
to the Sacred Order of the Priesthood**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

May 24, 2025

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brother priests and deacons, beloved consecrated women and men religious, family members and friends of our *ordinandi*, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is *good* for us to be here with you and with Our Lord on this glorious day in the month of May, dedicated to Mary, Mother of Our Lord and Mother of the Church, to witness and celebrate the ordination of two Deacons to Christ's priesthood: Charles Delano and Ryan Kehoe.

Although we priests all share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, we each retain our unique and distinct backgrounds, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, and gifts that we bring with us in our ministry, so I will start by telling you about each of our *ordinandi*.

Charles Delano is the son of Charles ("Chip") and Erika Delano. He is the first of their three children. His hometown is right here in Springfield.

He grew up at Blessed Sacrament Parish and attended grade school there. His family joined Saint Katharine Drexel Parish after he graduated from Springfield High School. He attended Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, where he restarted the SIUE College Knights of Columbus and served as Grand Knight. He then attended Saint Meinrad Seminary in Indiana. In discerning his vocation to the priesthood, he considered joining the Augustinian Order instead of the diocese, making several visits to the Augustinians in Chicago and at Villanova University. In his prayer he discerned that he was called to be a diocesan priest. We won't tell Pope Leo that Charlie decided against joining his religious community! As a newly-ordained priest, he is most looking forward to celebrating Mass and hearing confessions. For his first assignment as a priest, he will be returning to Decatur as Parochial Vicar at Holy Family Parish and Chaplain at Saint Teresa High School.

Ryan Kehoe is the son of Stephen and Janet Kehoe. He is the fourth of seven siblings. His hometown is Athens, Illinois, and his home parish is Saint Aloysius in Springfield. He was homeschooled Kindergarten through 12th grade and attended Lincoln Land Community College, Bishop Simon Brutè College Seminary in Indianapolis, and Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in

St. Louis. A unique fact about Ryan is that he worked as a carnival employee while he was in high school. As I said, every priest has a unique and distinct background! As a newly ordained priest, he is most looking forward to celebrating the Sacraments and serving at his parish, which will be Blessed Sacrament Parish here in Springfield.

I note that both of our *ordinandi* this year were born and raised in our diocese here in Central Illinois, and so I commend their home parishes for helping to foster their vocations to the priesthood. I pray that all of our parishes will be places that provide a conducive spiritual atmosphere for young people to discern a vocation to priesthood or religious life.

This ordination of priests takes place in the context of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. While the Eucharistic ritual is familiar to most of us here, the Rite of Ordination is a liturgical ceremony that perhaps many here in attendance today have not experienced before, so I would like to offer some explanation of the rituals and symbols that we will be using in this ordination liturgy. Symbols are intended to convey meaning, so it is essential that we understand the meaning behind the symbols if we are truly to appreciate their significance and participate fully in their celebration.

The rite of ordination for priests takes place within Mass following the bishop's homily after the scriptural readings proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word. Standing before the bishop, those to be ordained together make five resolutions.

First, they resolve "to discharge, unfailingly, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the office of Priesthood in the presbyteral rank, as trustworthy co-workers with the Order of Bishops, in feeding the Lord's flock."

Then they resolve "to carry out the ministry of the Word worthily and wisely, in the preaching of the Gospel and teaching of the Catholic faith."

Third, they resolve "to celebrate the mysteries of Christ reverently and faithfully according to the tradition of the Church, especially the Sacrifice of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for the praise of God and the sanctification of the Christian people."

Fourth, they resolve "to implore with us the mercy of God for the people" entrusted to their care, "with zeal for the commandment to pray without ceasing." This is done principally by praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily at the appointed times throughout the day.

Fifth, they resolve "to be united more closely each day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a pure sacrifice, and

with him to consecrate [themselves] to God for the salvation of all.”¹ This identification of the priest with the pure sacrifice of Christ the High Priest and being consecrated to God for the salvation of all is lived out in the commitment to chaste celibacy.

After the candidates for ordination declare their intention and their resolve to undertake the priestly office, each one to be ordained goes before the bishop and makes a promise of obedience. As he does so, he kneels before the bishop and places his hands between those of the bishop. The bishop asks him: “Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?” One of the commentaries on this promise says, “The man to be ordained must answer yes to this question if he is to be ordained.” That is not as easy as it may sound. In my experience as a priest and as a bishop, I believe that obedience is the most difficult of the promises made by clergy. Our highly sexualized culture probably thinks that celibacy would be the most difficult promise that a priest makes, but obedience grates against our very sense of selfhood and our tendency to autonomy and self-determination, inherited from the first human beings, Adam and Eve, whose Original Sin was the sin of disobedience.

The word obedience comes from the Latin *obaudire*, which means “to hear or listen to.” Referring to His Blessed Mother, Jesus said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28).

The purpose of obedience, therefore, is not a matter of arbitrarily imposing authority or seeking to exercise control for its own sake, but flows rather out of a sense of mission. The word “mission” comes from the Latin word *missio*, which means to send or dispatch someone. Just as Jesus sent his apostles and disciples on the mission to preach the Good News of God’s Kingdom to all the nations, to baptize them and make them His disciples, clergy are sent by their bishop, who is a successor of the apostles, to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was obedient to the Father for the sake of our salvation, we are called to be obedient to God’s will. Obedience is related to the mission of the Church in that none of us is a solo practitioner or lone ranger doing his own thing. Obedience in service of the mission helps to assure that the various ministries in a diocese are not done in a haphazard way out of personal whim, but are coordinated in an organized manner for the mission of the Church to be carried out in a coherent fashion for the good of the People of God.

The purpose of celibacy and chastity is not to encourage priests to be workaholics simply because they have more time to work since they do not have family responsibilities. Celibacy and chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven first of all point to the reality of the eternal life to which we are all called beyond life in this world. Celibacy and chastity also make the priest more available to minister to the needs of his parish family without the responsibilities of a biological family which are the priority of those called to the vocation of marriage and family life in the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The pledge to pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily is in keeping with one of the most basic expectations of the Church, as the faithful regularly ask their priests to pray for various intentions.

When these promises have been publicly proclaimed, the candidates then lie prostrate on the floor and the Litany of the Saints is sung, symbolizing the candidates' unworthiness for the office to be assumed and their dependence upon God and the prayers of the Christian community. This litany of supplication prays for the intercession of the saints in order that God may look favorably upon those to be ordained.

A prayer then follows asking that the Holy Spirit may be poured upon them. While these prayers are being prayed, the faithful are to join their prayers for the candidates to those of the bishop.

The essential matter of the Sacrament of Holy Orders is the laying on of hands and the essential form of the Sacrament is the prayer of ordination. Only a bishop can ordain a priest because he shares in the ministry of Jesus passed down through the apostles. At the ordination of a priest, the ordaining bishop lays hands on each man to be ordained a priest. This is done in silence. All of the priests who are present then lay hands on each candidate as well. This communal laying on of hands is to symbolize the fact that they are to be ordained into the presbyteral college of the local Church. This is in keeping with an ancient text found in the *Apostolic Tradition* which is believed to have been written by Hippolytus in 280 A.D. He states that this common laying on of hands takes place at a priest's ordination, because "they all have a common and similar spirit." By this ritual the ordaining bishop and the other priests invoke the Holy Spirit to come down upon the one to be ordained, giving him a sacred character and setting him apart for the designated ministry.

The bishop alone then says the prayer of ordination. It alludes to Aaron and the seventy elders called by Moses as Old Testament figures that prefigure the priests who will work as coworkers of the bishop. The prayer is directed to the Father, who by the power of the Holy Spirit provides for the various forms of ministry within the Church of Christ. After speaking of the Apostles “as consecrated in the truth and sharers in Christ’s mission,” it refers to priests as companions who “proclaim and carry out the work of salvation through all the world.” It asks for the “Spirit of holiness” for the new priests so that they may “inspire right conduct.” It also asks that they may be “faithful stewards” of God’s mysteries. While this prayer is being prayed, the faithful are to join their prayers silently to those of the bishop. Once this prayer is concluded, the men being ordained are priests.

Next comes the vesting of the stole and chasuble upon the newly ordained as symbols of their presbyteral office. Each of the deacons to be ordained priests entered the Cathedral wearing a stole diagonally across his chest tied at the side as for a deacon. It is now adjusted to be worn as proper for a priest, over the shoulders hanging down on both sides of his chest. The stole symbolizes the authority and responsibility to serve in imitation of Christ. It reflects the line from Scripture: *“For my yoke is easy and my burden*

light" (Matthew 11:30). Another priest assists in this and then helps the new priest to put on the outer garment called a chasuble. This is the proper vestment for a priest and bishop to wear for the celebration of the Eucharist. It is given to a priest because only he and a bishop may validly celebrate the Mass. He is to wear this whenever he presides at Mass.

The bishop then anoints the palms of the hands of each of the new priests. As he does so, he says: "May the Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, guard and preserve you, that you may sanctify the Christian people and offer sacrifice to God." Anointing with oil stems from the Old Testament and indicates that someone or something is being set apart for a sacred task or duty. The anointing of the hands signifies that the hands of the newly ordained priest are being prepared for performing his priestly duties and handling the sacred vessels which will be part of the priestly ministry, for example, consecrating the bread and the wine, anointing the sick and blessing people. It also symbolizes the priest's distinctive participation in Christ's priesthood by the sacrifice he will offer with his hands.

A paten holding the bread and a chalice containing wine mixed with water for the celebration of Mass are then presented to the newly ordained

priests. These are the symbols of the priest's duty to offer the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist at Mass and to follow the example of Christ crucified. The bishop presents them to each newly ordained priest saying: "Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you will do, imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross." This gesture ties the rite of ordination directly to the Eucharistic context and to the priest's service on behalf of the people of God.

The bishop and representatives of the presbyterate give the sign of peace to the newly ordained priests. This signifies their admittance to the rank of co-workers with the bishop and the other members of the local clergy who assist the bishop in his diocese. This does not replace the rite of peace later during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The sign of peace will be exchanged among all the members of the assembly at the usual time just before receiving Holy Communion.

The Mass then continues as usual, with the newly ordained serving as concelebrants with the bishop and the other priests present.

It is customary for me on special occasions to conclude my homily with a song. This is certainly a special occasion, so the song I have chosen is called "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" by Hillsong United.² I believe this song is

very appropriate for the Sacrament of Holy Orders, as the lyrics express very well how the Holy Spirit will lead us and strengthen our faith as the Lord calls us to follow Him without fear upon the waters of the great unknown. I invite you to close your eyes and let the lyrics wash over your thoughts.

You call me out upon the waters
The great unknown, where feet may fail
And there I find You in the mystery
In oceans deep, my faith will stand
...
And I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine
...
Your grace abounds in deepest waters
Your sovereign hand, will be my guide
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me
You've never failed and You won't start now
...

So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine

...

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander
And my faith will be made stronger
In the presence of my Savior

...

I will call upon Your name
Keep my eyes above the waves
My soul will rest in Your embrace
I am Yours and You are mine

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ *Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons*, English Translation according to the Second Typical Edition (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2021), pp. 71-72.

² Song from the album *Zion*. Writers: Matt Crocker, Joel Houston & Salomon Ligthelm; released September 10, 2013.