



Homily given by Bishop Anthony Randazzo
Bishop of Broken Bay

Ordination to the Diaconate - *Aldrin Valdehueza*
Our Lady of Dolours Church, Chatswood - 14 October 2020

Bibliographies from the time of the early Christian Church are either incredibly detailed or rather vague. The former is often the work of an historian or an educated official possibly an employee at the Imperial Court. The latter is, more often than not, the digest of various narratives collected over time. Sometimes from witnesses, sometimes piously embellished by well-meaning members of the community of the Church.

In the case of Pope Callistus ^(AD 218-222), whose feast we celebrate today, what we know about the Saint and Martyr, seems to be a combination of both. Historians have relied upon an account by Hippolytus of Rome who was not only Callistus' contemporary, but also his accuser and antagonist.

According to Hippolytus' account, Callistus began his career as a trusted domestic servant, who having fallen from grace, was condemned to work in the mines of Sardinia. Freed by Pope Victor ^(AD 189-199), Callistus became a deacon in Rome. Under Pope Zephyrinus ^(AD 199-217) he was given charge of a Christian cemetery in Rome. In addition to his oversight of the seventh corporal work of mercy, Callistus was a theological consultant to the Pope. It seems that upon the death of the Pope in 217, Callistus was a natural candidate to succeed as Bishop of Rome.

As Pope, Callistus was champion of the repentant sinner. He was often attacked over his position on doctrine and discipline – being accused of being too lenient. And yet, it seems obvious that through his own experience of rehabilitation, from runaway slave to ordained servant, Callistus knew firsthand the power of Divine Mercy. His clear leadership and spiritual vigour enabled him to animate penitents seeking reconciliation with the Body of Christ, the Church.

The words of the first century Martyr, Polycarp, quoted by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council could easily have been sourced from Callistus: “Be merciful, diligent, walking according to the truth of the Lord, who became the servant of all” *(cf Lumen gentium 29)*.

Aldrin, as you are ordained to the responsibility of the diaconate, I offer to you Saint Callistus as your heavenly patron. Look not to the superficial elements of his life, but rather to his unflinching fidelity to Christ and to his care of God's holy people.

As a deacon, you will first and foremost be a man of charity. You have chosen Paul's letter to the Galatians as your second reading tonight. In addressing Christians in Galatia, Paul

speaks to a community in crisis. It is a community desperately trying to make sense of what we might call a deeply secular life.

They are sinking in a quagmire of self-indulgence: fornication and immodesty; anger and quarrels; rivals and cliques, all the while looking to the law to bring order. Paul is unambiguous in his declaration that the ways of a secular society do not lead to the Kingdom of God.

Saint Paul offers the only viable solution, which is not the law but the Spirit. First among the fruits of the Spirit is charity. All the others, joy, peace, patience, and so on, flow from the steadfast love of God.

Aldrin, your ordination to the diaconate this evening is a high point of your pilgrimage of faith. It is a high point, not because it offers you a life of privilege or prestige, but rather because, the laying on of hands and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will set you apart for the service of God's Holy People. There is no greater privilege in the Church than to be the servant of charity.

Of course, we do not love things or ideas, or inanimate objects. We love God and we love God's people. The secular world presents material goods and earthly pleasures as the only way to peruse happiness. This is never the way of the Christian, and it can never be the way of the ordained ministers of the Church.

The obstacles that were experienced by Saint Callistus are also present today. In some regards, it is all the more serious, because they come from both within and without the Church. In our community of the Church women and men are wearied by such behaviour. Some are disenchanted and feel that their faith has been compromised. They have lack of interest and above all they lack joy and hope ^(cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80). Our Church is in need of leaders who will evangelise, not only by preaching the Gospel, but most importantly, by living it with charity, authenticity, and humility.

Aldrin, as deacon your duty is to preach the Word and to celebrate the Sacraments. In the power of the Spirit, you are to do all in charity and with joy ^(cf. *Ad Gentes*, 16). Be zealous and gracious and tender as you seek to exercise servant leadership in the community of the Church. Remember that you have been lavished by the Lord with great love and compassion. Reflecting upon your own experience, animate others to life in the Spirit.

My sisters and brothers, the whole Church is called to live life in the Spirit. In a particular way, our deacons are ordered to animate the Church's life through service and charity. As they seek to preach and live the mystery of the Lord's love, they sacramentalize the Church's service ^(cf. John Paul II, 19 Sep 1987)

As we now pray for this man Aldrin, our brother, may he become a sign of Christ's charity and service in the world. Pray that, like Saint Callistus, he will be steadfast in faith and rich in mercy and love.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, assist you Aldrin, so that Christ the Saviour will speak and act through you as you seek to serve God's holy people as deacon.