

The Lord says, Surely I come quickly: Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!

Philippians 4: 4-9

Advent, especially in this time of pandemic and global tension, sets before us a sense of expectation and hope, as we look and long for the coming of God's kingdom. "In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Though few in number we draw encouragement from the words of Jesus, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them." So it is with this confidence and hope that we gather together to ordain *Lorie a deacon/Steve a priest* in the Church of God.

"Rejoice in the Lord always," Paul exhorts the Philippians - and us - in the second lesson. "And again, I say, Rejoice. The Lord is near." These Ordinations today are cause indeed for rejoicing and giving thanks.

We give thanks for God's faithfulness to God's covenant with creation and with humankind, visible in the creation itself, and above all in Christ's Incarnation we are soon to celebrate, in his dying and rising again; for God's faithfulness in inviting human beings, *Lorie/Steve*, you and me, to share in the divine dance of love.

We give thanks for the Church's faithfulness - notwithstanding its many failings and betrayals down the ages - in proclaiming the good news, in prayer and worship, mission and service; in recognising God's work and God's calling in the lives of its members.

We give thanks for *Lorie's/Steve's* faithfulness: to the baptismal covenant, and in *her/his* journey of discernment, of discovering and responding to God's call and that of the Church, which has brought *her/him* here for ordination today. (Remember, though, that ordination is not the destination, a terminus, but a staging-post, a new beginning: God has yet more for us to discover, as we journey with Jesus in the Way.)

For *Lorie/Steve*, and for each of us here, our journeys and our experience of life and of God are unique. Indeed, how dull it would be if they were all identical! God has touched, nudged, challenged us, disclosed Godself to us in different ways, enabling us to become who we are today.

The first reading and the psalm offer two different experiences of God's self-disclosure and call. First, Isaiah's vision of God's glory in the Temple: angels chanting, incense ascending, the building shaking to its foundation. It is truly awesome, and Isaiah is awestruck! "Woe is me. I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Cleansed by the angel's burning coal, he hears God's call: "Whom shall I send, who will go for us?" - "Here am I. Send me."

Then the Psalmist: her no vision of glory and majesty, rather a patient waiting for the Lord. "God lifted me out of the desolate pit, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet on a high cliff and made my footing sure. God put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God." The response, though, is the same: "And so I said, "Behold, I come. I love to do your will, O my God.""

Lorie/Steve, I know you will have reflected over the years and in the recent discernment process on how God has been calling you, and revealing Godself to you. There is much, I am sure, for you to celebrate and for which to give thanks: we honour that here today.

In this next stage of your ministry and in the years to come, keep listening, keep looking for signs of God's presence, God's call, that nudge and challenge, drawing you more deeply into the divine dance. Be always ready to sing God's new song, to share as you are able with those amongst whom you serve what you experience of God's redeeming and transforming love. Pray for grace to say again and again - as you are saying today: "Here I am, Lord. I come to do your will. Send me."

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice. The Lord is near."