

**Dear fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ, and, especially, the newly-ordained Father Deacon Vasyl'!**

Today, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 is a historic day for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada. This is the first time after the retirement of Metropolitan Yuriy, that, as Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan Cathedral, I served the Divine Liturgy in this Metropolitan Cathedral in the city of Winnipeg and ordained pious Subdeacon Vasyl to the Holy Diaconate.

**Dearly beloved in Christ, Father Deacon Vasyl!**

You will remember this special day for your entire life. By the Grace of God, you entered through the Royal Doors into the Holy of Holies of the Orthodox temple, the Altar, which symbolizes the Heavenly Kingdom. In the Jerusalem Temple during the Old Testament times, only the high priest entered the altar with the sacrificial blood, and he did so only once a year because the path to the Heavenly Kingdom had been closed to humanity after the ancestral sin of Adam and Eve. The high priest was an embodiment of Christ and his aforesaid action symbolized the future opening of the Heavenly Kingdom by our Lord after He shed His Precious Blood on the Cross. When our Lord Jesus Christ died, the curtain of the Jerusalem Temple was torn in the middle and from that moment, God has opened the Heavenly Kingdom to all those who believe in Him.

Today, you have entered through the Royal Doors of the Holy Altar to become a servant of God. St. Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews wrote that "...no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was." (Heb. 5:4). Today is the day of your personal Pentecost. On the Holy Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles, who then ordained bishops, and through them, the Grace of the Holy Spirit is preserved in the Holy Orthodox Church through apostolic succession. This continues through me, an Orthodox Bishop, as a successor of the Holy Apostles, and today the Grace of the Holy Spirit descended upon you in your ordination to serve God as a deacon of the Holy Orthodox Church.

It is not you who has chosen the Lord, but it is He, who has chosen you and called you to serve Him. Of the billions of people who have lived and continue living in the world today, many are called, but few are chosen by Him to serve Him at the Holy Altar.

God has called you to serve Him, not in Ukraine, where you were born, but far away from your fatherland, across the ocean, in Canada, where the harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few. Your case is reminiscent of the words of God spoken to Abraham, when he was called to become a father to the chosen people: "Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1). Thus, God has called you to your new fatherland, and you have left your parents and those close to you behind, in order to do His Will. For the Lord says: "And everyone who has left house... or father or mother... or land, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Mt. 19:29). May God abundantly bless your parents for many more years because they raised you not only to bring joy to them and to support them, but also for the glory of God.

The Lord says, "a servant is not greater than his master" (Jn 13:16). On this path of God's service, you will be hearing the words "Hosanna!" addressed to you, but you will also hear "Crucify, crucify him!" Pay no attention to any of these words for in them is the vanity of the world. The words you will hear from God on the Day of His Dread Judgement are much more important. At that time you will give your account to Him about your service to His Holy Church.

"The Divine Grace, which always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking", has filled you today and it will empower you to bear your cross of serving God and His Holy Church.

Dear Father Deacon Vasyl', may God help you to become a pious deacon and the servant of the Holy Mysteries so that you will be praising Him with all of the heavenly hosts: "...angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities, powers, and many-eyed Cherubim...Seraphim..." Today you have joined in with them to praise God during the Divine Liturgy.

I prayerfully wish that you, Father Deacon Vasyl' will always do what "is proper and right to worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: The Trinity, One-in-Essence and Undivided".

**Dearly beloved fathers, brothers, and sisters in Christ!**

Please pray for the good the estate of the UOCC and for the unity of us all, so that God may bless, enlighten, and guide us all on the righteous

road to salvation. Please pray for me, so that the Lord may strengthen me to bear this new cross, the temporary Primate of the UOCC, and I assure you of my fervent prayers for all of you.

**May God help us all! Christ is amongst us!**