**ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE REVEREND DEACON JOHN MORRILL.**

**SATURDAY 21st SEPTEMEBER 2024.**

**FEAST: ST.MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.**

**JESUS WAS WALKING ON FROM HAVING HEALED A PARALYTIC.**

**NOW JESUS SEES A MAN SITTING BY THE CUSTOMS HOUSE AND, WITHOUT ANY PRELIMINARIES, ADDRESSES HIM SAYING: FOLLOW ME.**

**THE MAN WAS MATTHEW, WHO WOULD BECOME AN APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.**

**IN TODAY’S EXTRACT FROM CHAPTER 9 OF MATTHEW’S GOSPEL, WE BEAR WITNESS TO A MOMENT WHEN AN AFFLICTED SOUL RECEIVES THE HEALING, FORGIVENESS, A MOMENT WHEN A MAN EMBRACES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A PROFOUND CONVERSION.**

**JESUS GOES ON TO SIT AT TABLE WITH TAX-COLLECTORS AND SINNERS.**

**JESUS GOES ON TO SIT AT TABLE WITH US ALL – FOR IT IS NOT THE HEALTHY WHO NEED THE DOCTOR, BUT THE SICK.**

**THE CALL GOES OUT – FOLLOW ME INTO THE PASTURES OF GRACE.**

**THE VOICE OF JESUS ALONE IS CAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE DEPTHS OF THE HUMAN SOUL, CAPABLE OF LIBERATING THE HUMAN SOUL FROM THE CAPTIVITY OF SIN.**

**TODAY, WE REJOICE TO PRESENT THIS MAN FOR ORDINATION, A MAN WHO HAS HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS CALLING TO HIM ON SO MANY OCCIASIONS, A MAN WHO HAS WILLINGLY AND GENEROUSLY RESPONDED TO THE CALL OF JESUS IN SO MANY WAYS ACROSS A LIFETIME.**

**JOHN STEPHEN MORRILL WAS BORN ON THE 12th JUNE 1946, WHICH MEANS HE IS 78 YEARS OF AGE.**

**SOME EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, THE REVEREND PROFESSOR APPROACHED ME, AS HIS NEWLY APPOINTED DIOCESAN BISHOP, TO REQUEST THAT I GIVE CONSIDERATION TO HIS EARNEST AND EXPRESS DESIRE TO BE ORDAINED TO THE PRIESTHOOD.**

**HIS AGE PLACED HIM BEYOND THE ESTABLISHED CANONICAL NORM FOR ORDINATION.**

**ALTHOUGH I POSSESED THE AUTHORITY TO DECIDE ON THIS MATTER BY GRANTING A DISPENSATION, I THOUGHT IT BEST TO CONSULT THE CARDINAL PREFECT OF THE DICASTERY FOR THE CLERGY AT THE HOLY SEE.**

**I THEREFORE PREPARED A LETTER TO WHICH I ATTACHED A DETAILED CURRICULUM VITAE.**

**WHEN IT CAME TO PROVIDING AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROPOSED CANDIDATE’S ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND OUTLINING THE SCOPE OF HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER, MY TEXT ELONGATED CONSIDERABLY.**

**THIS SON OF DIDSBURY IN MANCHESTER EXCELLED AT SCHOOL AND WENT UP TO TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, WHERE HIS ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS WERE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED AND CELEBRATED.**

**FROM 1971 TO 1976 HE SERVED AS A JUNIOR FELLOW AT TRINITY BEFORE TRANSLATING TO SELWYN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, WHERE HE HAS SERVED AS A FELLOW, AS VICE-MASTER, AND AS ACTING-MASTER.**

**AS PROFESSOR OF BRITISH AND IRISH HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, JOHN’S SCHOLARSHIP BUILT HIM A GLOBAL REPUTATION.**

**HE HAS EARNED ACOLADES AND FELLOWSHIPS TOO MANY TO MENTION HERE.**

**HE HAS WRITTEN A SOLID TOWER OF BOOKS AND PRODUCED A CASCADE OF LEARNED PAPERS AND THERE ARE STILL MORE PROJECTS APPROACHING COMPLETION AS I SPEAK.**

**I CANNOT FAIL TO MENTION HOW POIGNANT IT IS THAT THE WORLD’S MOST RENOWNED CROMWELLIAN SCHOLAR IS ABOUT TO BE ORDAINED AS A CATHOLIC PRIEST.**

**I AM AN THUSIAST FOR BIOGRAPHIES, HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL, BUT I CONFESS THAT I HAVE NOT FOUND SPACE ON MY SHELVES FOR A BIOGRAPHY OF THE LORD PROTECTOR, NOT EVEN ONE WRITTEN BY THE REVEREND PROFESSOR WHO SITS BEFORE ME.**

**I DO HOPE THAT OLIVER’S GRAVE STIRS, IF NOT REPTURES, JUST A LITTLE TODAY.**

**IN THE LETTER I RECEIVED FROM THE CARDINAL PREFECT IN REPLY TO MY CORRESPONDENCE THERE WAS FULL RECOGNITION OF JOHN’S ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE FORMATION HE RECEIVED IN PREPARATION FOR HIS ORDINATION AS A ‘PERMANENT’ DEACON.**

**HOWEVER, THERE WAS A ‘CONCERN’ REGARDING THE QUALITATIVE BREADTH AND DEPTH OF HIS PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT.**

**I OFFERED ASSURANCE THAT FR.ALBAN McCOY, A FRANCISCAN CONVERTUAL AND FELLOW OF ST.EDMUND’S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, WAS FRUITFULLY ACCOMPANYING THE PROFESSOR AND RIGOROUSLY EXPANDING HIS HORIZONS.**

**THERE WAS ALSO THE THORNY QUESTION OF THE PROFESSOR’S GRASP OF CANON LAW. MY CATHEDRAL PROVOST AND DIOCESAN CHANCELLOR, MONSIGNOR EUGENE HARKNESS, ADDRESSED THE ‘GAPING ABYSS’ OF CANONICAL IGNORANCE.**

**JUST THIS PAST WEEK, WHILST IN LONDON, I FOUND THIS VOLUME ON MEDEIVEAL CANONICAL DECRETALS AND I WAS SORELY TEMPTED TO SCRUTINIZE THE PROFESSOR – BUT I AM NOT SO CRUEL.**

**THIS MAN OF LETTERS, THIS MOST EMINENT OF SCHOLARS, IS A MAN DEVOID OF PRETENCE.**

**THIS MAN HAS LOVED MUCH AND IS LOVED MUCH.**

**JOHN, TODAY YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER, WILLIAM AND MARJORIE, ARE LOOKING ON.**

**YOUR CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE BEGAN WHEN YOUR PARENTS TOOK YOU TO THE ANGLICAN PARISH CHURCH OF ST.JAMES IN DIDSBURY, THERE TO BE BAPTISED ON THE 28th JULY 1946, JUST SIX WEEKS AFTER YOUR BIRTH.**

**IT WAS ON THE 17TH DECEMBER 1977 THAT YOU WERE RECEIVED INTO FULL COMMUNION WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH UNDER THE TUTILAGE OF THE REVEREND PROFESSOR JOHN COVENTRY S.J, MASTER OF ST.EDMUND’S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.**

**IT WAS, OF COURSE, YOUR WIFE WHO WAS YOUR TRUE TUTOR.**

**TODAY, YOUR BEOLOVED WIFE, FRANCES DREDA MARY, IS LOOKING ON.**

**IT WAS IN OXFORD THAT YOU ENCOUNTERED THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE AND MARRIED HER ON THE 27th JULY 1968.**

**SHE LOOKS ON AND IS HOLDING YOU STEADY THIS DAY.**

**THE GLORIOUS FRUIT OF YOUR SHARED LIFE AND LOVE, THEY ARE HERE TODAY, YOUR BELOVED CHILDREN.**

**RACHEL, RUTH, NAOMI, CLARE, ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR FAMILIES.**

**WE ALL STAND WITH YOU TODAY IN THE SOLIDARITY OF LOVE AND RESPECT, SUPPORTING YOU IN YOUR APPROACH TO THE SANCTUARY, SUPPORTING YOU IN YOUR EMBRACE OF THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD.**

**JOHN, YOUR MANY FRIENDS ARE HERE.**

**THEY REPRESENT THE VARIED ARENAS OF YOUR VAST EXPERIENCE ACROSS THE DECADES.**

**ALL WHO ARE ASSEMBLED HER TODAY, ALONG WITH A VAST MULTITUDE BEYOND THESE HALLOWED WALLS, REJOICE IN BEARING WITNESS TO THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR LIFE AS A HUSBAND, AS A FATHER, AS A FRIEND.**

**ALL OF US REJOICE IN BEARING WITNESS TO THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR MINISTERIAL SERVICE AS A DEACON AND WE ALL DELIGHT IN LOOKING FORWARD TO BEHOLDING YOU FUTURE SACRIFICIAL MINISTRY AS A PRIEST.**

**AS YOUR BISHOP, I ADDRESS TO YOU THE WISDOM PROCLAIMED THROUGH THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS.**

**“I IMPLORE YOU TO LEAD A LIFE WORTHY OF YOUR VOCATION.”**

**“DO ALL YOU CAN TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRITBY THE PEACE THAT BINDS US TOGETHER.”**

**JOHN, THROUGH YOUR OWN SHARE OF GRACE, ALLOTTED BY CHRIST, YOU HAVE LONG BEEN A TEACHER.**

**NOW YOU AWAIT THE BESTOWAL OF ANOTHER GRACE, A GRACE THAT WILL DRAW YOU INTO THE SACRIFICIAL PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST HIMSELF.**

**BY BAPTISM YOU WERE CALLED TO BEFULLY MATURE WITH THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST.**

**THAT ENDURING VOCATION WILL SOON BE CHANNELLED THROUGH THE EXERCISE OF THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD.**

**MATTHEW, LEVI, THE TAX-COLLECTOR, WHO WAS SITTING BY THE CUSTOMS HOUSE, A COLLABORATOR WITH ROMAN IMPERIAL OPPRESSION, A MAN WHO HAD COMPROMISED THE INTEGRITY OF HIS OWN FAITH BY EXPLOITING HIS OWN PEOPLE, MATTHEW THE SINNER HEARD A VOICE CALLING TO HIM.**

**THIS VOICE PENETRATED TO THE VERY DEPTH OF HIS SOUL.**

**THIS WAS THE SOLE VOICE THAT WAS CAPABLE OF ABSOLVING SIN.**

**THIS WAS THE SOLE VOICE AND WILL THAT WAS FINALLY CAPABLE OF DEFINING SACRIFICE AS MERCY.**

**THE VOICE OF THE LORD THAT ADDRESSED MATTHEW NOW ADDRESSES YOU, JOHN AFRESH.**

**FOLLOW ME.**

**FOLLOW ME NOW AND FOREVER.**

**AMEN.**