



### **THREE TRANSITIONAL DEACONS ORDAINED TO THE ORDER OF PRIESTHOOD IN THE DIOCESE OF ALIWAL**

His Lordship Rt. Rev Bishop Joseph Maria Kizito, the bishop of the Diocese of Aliwal this past Saturday the 22 October 2022 on the feast day of Saint John Paul II ordained three young men into the order of Priesthood. Three are Fr Zachaeus Tembo SCJ (a member of the congregation of Priests of the Sacred Heart) and two diocesan Priests; Fr Joseph Namugera and Fr Joseph Bukenua Bbombokka at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Aliwal. The colourful ceremony was graced by the presence of Provincial Superior of the SCJ's South African Province, Rev Fr Krzysztof (Chris) Grzelak, SCJ, priests, religious sisters and the people of God from various corners of the world as far as Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa as the Cathedral was full to capacity.

After the readings and the proclaiming of the Gospel, the men were called before Bishop Kizito and were examined, of each of the three, where represented by the people of God from where they have been working as deacons, testified that they have been found worthy to the candidacy to priesthood and therefore they pleading with the bishop to ordain them to the order of priesthood. In his response Bishop Kizito said "relying on the help of the Lord God and of our saviour, Jesus Christ, we choose these, our brothers, for the order of the priesthood," as the congregation responded with resounding applause.

When delivering the homily, Bishop Kizito filled with joy, told the packed church that it was a day of joy and blessings because these three, “our brothers, heard the call, the whisper of the Lord, enter their hearts and generously responded, and having gone through years of formation and no small measure of sacrifice, they present themselves today, freely and willingly, to be configured to Christ, the Servant, to become a living sacrament of service in our midst.” He thereafter, took out his Episcopal pamphlet prayer for vocations, and reflected on it testifying that the Lord had answered the prayers by giving them to these priests as he shared what exactly is on the prayer. In the first paragraph he said “I am praying to God, Almighty and powerful God you love us and you loved the world that you gave your only son all believing in him may have eternal life.” As he continued he explained that “in the first paragraph of my prayer I am appealing to God that Lord the harvest is abounded at this stage but the labourers are few. We are few in this diocese as priests and we are few as religious sisters and the people of God are many. I had to turn to the Lord in prayer to call the laborious, the workers. And that is what we also apply in the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah whom God knew before he was born, had appointed him to be a prophet to a special office. Jeremiah had his own personal experiences, he said “I cannot speak, I am very young.” Turning to the deacons he said, “but when I look at our three deacons, you don’t look very young, you are just at the right age for the mission, you know how to speak well local language and you don’t have an excuse for you to speak unlike Jeremiah who was afraid to go out to the mission. Therefore, I do not think that you are afraid of my brothers and sisters. The Lord touched Jeremiah! Today we are celebrating and we are asking the Lord to touch you so that he may lead you into his vineyard. On my prayer part, the prayer for vocation I was praying especially for the priesthood. And in my second part of the prayer, I had to say we pray to the Lord of the harvest willing to spare themselves for you. That you are going to spare the time with the Lord. This is the office of service. The Lord is calling you to minister to the laity present today, the office is not all about you. The office of Priesthood is about Jesus Christ, to make Jesus visible and available to all the people and that is the office you are being called today. You should make Jesus Christ your friend, thus what the people of God are waiting for from you today and expecting of you is to offer them the Holy sacrifice and offer them the sacraments so that they may celebrate them with joy. The people of God gathered here today wait for you to touch them with a healing hand to touch their lives with the dynamic, authentic and joyful celebrations of liturgy. When you are celebrating the liturgy the people are waiting to see Jesus Christ in you, who is relevant to their lives. A church that can walk with the people, you are called to heal their wounds, the people that you see here gathered are wounded and we are all wounded one way or the other. Therefore, do not be afraid to heal us, do not be afraid to touch us. Use your hands, use your talents, use your treasures to heal the people. Connect the people to Jesus Christ and engage them. My prayer calls for priests who are passionate, I would like to have priests who are passionate about the scripture about the bible, without the scripture my dear brothers you are going to become ideological, priests of the mind. I would not like to be preached by the priest of the mind rather I would like to be preached by the priest of the heart. Touch the people and pray for them, teach them how to pray. In his encyclical Pope Frances ‘Fratelli tutti,’ says, “I ask you especially we the priest and you to commit yourselves to the unity

of togetherness as priests.” Priests need priests. You must always stand to your brothers and sisters who are ready to receive you, you are not alone, reach out to also other priests, those of this diocese and those who come from other dioceses. Embrace the other ministers from other churches. Be priests who can serve the needy, the poor and the marginalized, especially here we have so many migrants and refugees. The lord is calling you to reach out to them and be close with them, thus showing them God’s love and mercy.

Provincial Superior of the congregation of Priests of the Sacred Heart, Rev Father Grzelak SCJ, with his heartfelt gratitude thanked Most Reverend Bishop Joseph Kizito for having ordained these three men, he also thanked the parents and families of the newly ordained for nourishing and handing them the faith to respond positively to the call of the Lord. That they continue and remain as priests and servants of the Lord. He also reminded the newly ordained that “this priesthood they have received is not a personal gift, it is the gift of the church and his people whom they will minister.” And lastly the three newly ordained sent their appreciation to God, the ordaining Bishop, their formatters, vocation directors, priests and religious, parents and the communities they have worked with thus promising to work with them as their journey has begun. However, they acknowledged that just like one scholar who said, “A priest is a broken man, breaking bread for broken people,” therefore they are pleading to the faithful to accommodate them as they are and correct them where they may happen to go astray, because “we are human beings just like you. We therefore, request you to pray for us so as to be good priests.” This celebration of the sacrament of priesthood came at the appropriate time prior to mission Sunday as the church is praying for more vocations to Priesthood and Religious Life.

**By Sr Phatsimo Veronica Ramokgwebana SC**