



Priestly Ordination: Building the Church while doors are closed.

On the 8th of August 2019 two Vietnamese seminarians landed in Australia to complete their pastoral placement as part of their ongoing studies to enter the priesthood. These seminarians are members of the religious congregation the Society of the Divine Saviour, or Salvatorians as they are more commonly known, which is an international congregation ministering in many countries across the world. One of these seminarians, Deacon Paul Tran Van Duong SDS, has been serving in Gosford Parish on the New South Wales Central Coast since late 2019.

Deacon Paul's Ordination to the Priesthood was scheduled to take place in Manila on the 18th of April 2020. His family in Vietnam had been preparing to meet him in the Philippines to be part of this joyous occasion where it was estimated that more than 1000 people would be in attendance. However, like many significant events in our lives at the moment, all these plans were cancelled, due to the current local and global restrictions in relation to the health crisis that has eventuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deacon Paul did not let this get in the way of his calling from God: "I believe that God has a plan for me that includes my precious time in this country, and particularly the Parish of St Patrick's Gosford where I consider the community there as my second family. I thank the Gosford community for their unwavering support of me and for welcoming me into their hearts."

After prayerful discernment and in consultation with his own Regional Superior from the Philippines Fr Adam Janus SDS, the Australian Regional Superior Fr George Kolodziej SDS, and with the approval of their Superior General Fr Milton Zonta SDS, it was requested that the local Bishop of the Diocese of Broken Bay, the Most Reverend Anthony Randazzo DD, JCL ordain Deacon Paul into the Order of the Priesthood on Thursday 16 April.

Bishop Randazzo joyfully accepted this request and ordained Deacon Paul during a Mass without a congregation, which was live streamed allowing the local community to participate virtually, along with Deacon Paul's family in Vietnam and his religious community in Manila.

In the days leading up to the ordination Bishop Anthony said, "I am delighted that this moment of grace has been given to us in Broken Bay and I am confident that you will keep Deacon Paul in your thoughts and prayers over these coming days."

The decision to be ordained here in Australia away from his family and without the significant event planned was not one taken lightly by the now Fr Paul Tran SDS, however his approach to this challenging situation has been incredibly gracious.

“I feel very blessed to be ordained into the priesthood in Australia which has come about because I can’t return to the Philippines during this crucial period of the pandemic virus where I would have been ordained in the presence of my family and friends.” Fr Paul said the day prior to his Ordination.

“My ordination is a time of joyous witnessing during this period when people are struggling with COVID-19 and I strongly believe it may bring light and hope to many people who will witness it via live streaming, and I am very grateful for this.”

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