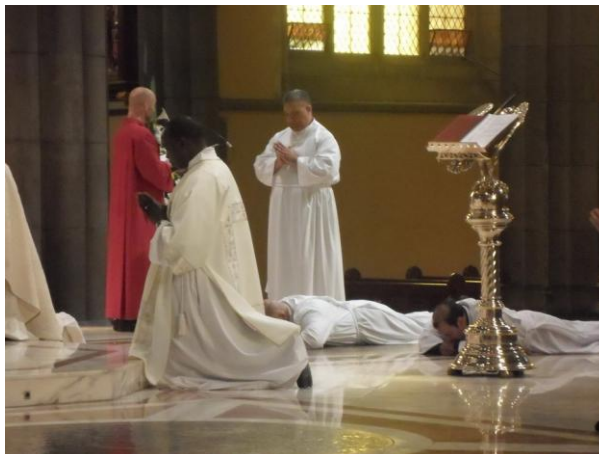


Archdiocese welcomes three new permanent deacons

by Chris Creo

For most Melbournians, the 23 November 2013 was just another rainy day. But for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, especially for the many gathered inside St Patrick's Cathedral, it was a momentous occasion as Archbishop Denis Hart ordained three men to the diaconate.



The ordinations of Pselio Lemalu, Francisco Javier Ramirez and Poukesi Vakauta to the diaconate brought the number of active permanent deacons in Melbourne to 11 while another three men are undergoing formation and are expected to be ordained next year.

The diaconate is the first of three orders of ordained ministry in the Catholic Church, the other two being Priests and Bishops. Deacons preparing for the priesthood are *transitional deacons*, while those not planning to be ordained priests are *permanent deacons*.



Deacon Pselio was born in Samoa and is a parishioner of St. Peter's Parish, Clayton.



Deacon Francisco, originally from El Salvador, is a parishioner of Our Lady's Parish in Sunshine.



Deacon Poukesi, originally from Tonga, is a parishioner of Our Lady's Parish Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park.

All three men were very active in their Catholic communities prior to commencing diaconal formation. This will hold them in good stead to serve God and the Church as ordained ministers.

Because of the cultural backgrounds of the newly ordained deacons, the ordination Mass also showcased the multicultural character of the Church of Melbourne with Catholic faithful coming from the Samoan, Tongan and Spanish communities to witness the occasion.

The newly ordained deacons said they all feel awesome, excited and deeply grateful to all the people who help in their diaconal journey, especially their respective families.

“We thank God it (the formation) is over and yet we know this is just the beginning of a new journey where we are now going to put all that we have learned into action,” Deacon Pselio said, adding that the focus of their diaconal ministry will be the Word of God.

After the ordination Archbishop Hart assigned Deacon Pselio to the partnered parishes of Sacred Heart and Christ Our Holy Redeemer in Oakleigh and Oakleigh East, respectively, while Deacon Francisco will be assigned to the parish of Resurrection in Kings Park and Deacon Poukesi to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Gladstone Park.

There they will be assisting their respective parish priests in Masses, which includes preaching from time to time, celebrating baptisms, officiating marriage and conducting funeral liturgies.

In his homily, the Archbishop thanked the wives of the three deacons for their “discernment and support to this day and for the work that these men will be able to do as fruit of their love of Jesus Christ, of their marriage and of their love of the Church.”

He also said the ordination to the diaconate of Pselio, Poukesi and Francisco “is a reminder to every one of us here present of the ongoing call to service which is of the essence of Christ-like love.”

The ordination followed six years of formation, the first two years dedicated to discernment while the next four years as the formal formation period focusing on the human, spiritual, pastoral dimensions. They also completed or are in the process of completing their academic studies to complete a Bachelor of Theology degree.



Deacons with their wives after the ordination: (From left) Lesieli Vakauta, Deacon Poukesi, Deacon Pselio, Imeleta Lemalu, Dinora Ramirez and Deacon Francisco. (Photo: Sanghaya Creo)