

Fr. Dinh has something in common with the figure of David in this morning's first reading: Dinh is the last to be ordained from his ordination class in the diocese of Dalat in Vietnam, and he is the youngest of his class – we won't make so much of the description of David as "a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance," lest we flatter Dinh's vanity.

It is a very good thing to have arrived at the place where one is called to be. I know this is a source of joy for Dinh's Mom and family, and for Dinh's Dad who for reasons of health was unable to join the rest of the family for Dinh's ordination yesterday. It's a source of joy for all of us who have been part of Dinh's journey, including this 10:00 a.m. worshipping community.

So we thank God for Dinh's vocation received and responded to, and for the long journey that brought him to this beautiful day. I was privileged to accompany Dinh to Vietnam in late November, and the most important part of that time for me was to get clear in my head and my heart the particular circumstances of Dinh's vocation: how it was born as a kind of holy defiance of the tawdry and unholy depredations of the Communist takeover of South Vietnam in the years following 1975. The light of faith seems always to shine more brightly when it stands opposed to external forces aimed at stamping it out. In that context, Dinh's vocation, along with a host of religious and priestly vocations arising from difficult political situations, serves in the words of today's passage from Ephesians, "to expose the fruitless works of darkness" and to bring one to live fully as a child of the light.

As a professed Assumptionist religious and as a deacon of the Church, Dinh has already placed his life in the service of God's Word. (For the young people in today's congregation, I'd invite you to think about those words.... *He has placed his life in the service of God's Word*, and to ask yourselves into whose service your life will be given over.) The additional powers vested in Dinh by virtue of yesterday's laying on of hands by Bishop McManus include the authority to say – and Dinh may you never stop trembling in awe at this –

"Send forth the power of your Spirit so that these gifts of bread and wine may become for us the body and blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ

" and

I absolve you of your sins in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

. For weak and sinful men, who themselves are most in need of these immeasurably beautiful gifts, this is a wonder no less startling than the Incarnation itself. The hierarchical role that has now been entrusted to you, Dinh, exists always in service of the Church's growth in holiness; that is to say, the Petrine principle of the Church's life – its authoritative structure – is intended always to serve the Church's Marian principle – her response in loving obedience to the transforming power of God's Word. As a dispenser of Word and sacrament, the principle

means whereby that growth in holiness is fostered, you have the awesome privilege of mediating the presence of Christ to all who, like the blind man in today's Gospel, yearn for his healing touch. Believe me, it brings tears to the eyes.

So thanks and praise to God is the order of the day. The timing of this first Mass day seems fitting on any number of levels: the Church's invitation during Lent to an ever deeper incorporation into the paschal mystery - in a global context where the tumult of the nations is ever before our eyes - and on a campus where hundreds of visiting young people are making important decisions about their future. Dinh himself has spoken of his vocation as a way of witnessing to the power of love, peace, and beauty in the world. Let us join with him in asking God on this most encouraging day to open our eyes to the wonder of his love, of his peace, and of his beauty.

Fr. Dennis Gallagher, A.A.