

Baltimore's newly ordained priests radiate joy

By Elizabeth Lowe

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Deacons James Boric, Ross Edward “Ned” Conklin Jr., Andrew DeFusco, Joseph Langan and Canisius Tah all appeared to be deep in prayer, realizing the sanctity of the moment, as they filed down the center aisle of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland June 21.

Moments later, Boric, 35, Conklin, 49, DeFusco, 31, Langan, 28, and Tah, 33, were ordained to the priesthood by Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori at the cathedral during a two-and-a-half-hour Mass.

The liturgy represented the culmination of years of discernment, training and pastoral work in parishes in the archdiocese.

To view a slideshow from the event, navigate the arrows below. See a photo you would be interested in purchasing? Click here.

In his homily, Archbishop Lori used imagery of God as the vine grower.

“In his great love, God has chosen you to serve him and to serve the church in his very person, as priests,” Archbishop Lori said. “The process of priestly formation has been long and slow, carefully watched with great patience and vigilance. And so you are ready for today, ready to be ordained. Each of you brings with you today the fruit of the work of grace in your soul, which has built upon your own gifts and talents.

“So if you want your priestly ministry to be fruitful,” he said, “you must remain in the Lord’s love by faith and hope, like a branch, a living branch, connected to the vine. If you would celebrate the Mass and sacraments not as a personal performance, but rather to bring about the salvation of souls, then you must imitate in daily life the love you celebrate: the love of Christ who laid down his life for us and for our salvation.”

Baltimore Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski, who was appointed June 19 by Pope Francis to head the Diocese of Springfield, was present for the ordination, and Archbishop Lori gave those gathered an opportunity to thank and congratulate him. The bishop received lengthy applause and a standing ovation from the packed cathedral.

During the liturgy, the men were presented as candidates for ordination. They placed their hands in those of Archbishop Lori, promising respect and obedience to him and his successors.

In an expression of their total dependence on God, they prostrated themselves on the floor as several hundred faithful chanted the Litany of the Saints.

Archbishop Lori and dozens of other priests laid their hands on the heads of the men, signifying the conferral of the Holy Spirit, an ancient gesture rooted in Scripture. The men were vested with the stole and chasuble, signs of the priestly office.

Their first blessing at the end of Mass was to Archbishop Lori, who announced the assignments for the new priests: Father Boric to St. Margaret, Bel Air; Father Conklin to Our Lady of the Fields, Millersville; Father DeFusco to the cathedral; Father Langan to St. John the Evangelist, Severna Park, for the summer, then returning to Rome to complete his studies; and Father Tah to Church of the Resurrection, Ellicott City.

During the recessional, the faithful who filled the cathedral applauded and cheered for the newly ordained priests who smiled as they processed down the aisle.

After the liturgy, the new priests smiled broadly as they greeted family, friends and those who have been instrumental to their formation. They solemnly offered countless blessings to members of the faithful, as well as to Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden.

Father Boric said in the days leading up to his ordination he felt “perfect peace.”

“I remember thinking over the years you just want to get to this day, but this is the beginning of a life of service,” he said.

Following the liturgy, Father Boric said he felt “overwhelmingly joyful and peaceful.” He is particularly excited to celebrate Mass and hear confessions.

Father Boric celebrated his first Mass June 21 at his home parish, St. Louis in Clarksville. He celebrated Mass the following morning at St. John in Westminster.

Shari Boric, Father Boric’s mother, is thrilled about her son’s ordination, a first for her family.

“I can’t be any prouder of him,” said Boric, 58, who resides in Cincinnati, Ohio.

“He’s true to the faith and I think he’s going to be a wonderful, holy priest.”

Father Langan said he has been dreaming about becoming a priest since age 11.

“I always day dreamed about the priest having the privilege to handle the body of Christ,” he said.

After his ordination, Father Langan said he felt “overjoyed, grateful and humbled by the outpouring of prayers.”

He noted that he was struck by a sense of peace the moment he was ordained.

“I’m eager to serve him,” Father Langan said.

He celebrated his first Mass June 22 at St. John in Westminster, his home parish. He was baptized, received his first Communion and was confirmed there.

Joseph and Mary Ann Langan, Father Langan’s parents and parishioners of St. John in Westminster, were beaming following the liturgy.

“I’m glad it’s here,” Joseph said. “I’m proud of him. He is truly a gift from God.”

Mary Ann, 65, described her son's ordination as a blessing.

"It's an awesome blessing that God chose us to have this child to give back to him," she said.

Father Conklin, who first considered the priesthood at age 8, said following the liturgy he felt "very happy."

"I experienced extreme peace after the archbishop laid his hands on me," he said.

Following his ordination, Father Tah, a native of Cameroon, grinned and said he felt "awesome."

"I've been dreaming about this day since I was a kid," said Father Tah, who first considered becoming a priest at age 7.

"I grew up in a very Catholic family. My parents raised us with a commitment to church."

He said the most powerful moment during the liturgy was the Litany of the Saints.

"It was very moving," he said. "I could feel the prayers of the people."

Father Tah celebrated his first Mass June 22 at St. Louis is Clarksville. He plans to celebrate a Mass with the Cameroon community at 2:30 p.m. June 29 at Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville. He also plans to celebrate a Mass next month in Cameroon.

After the liturgy, members of the Catholic Women's Association, Cameroon, sang as they danced down the aisle toward Father Tah. The group sang before and during the liturgy.

View a video of the women singing and dancing.

After the liturgy, Father DeFusco lovingly embraced his beaming grandmother, Martha Alves.

"I'm overwhelmed and very grateful," the 83-year-old said. "God is good."

Alves, a widow, has six children, 24 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Father DeFusco is her first grandchild to be ordained.

"It's absolutely amazing," said Alves, who resides in Columbus, Ohio. "It shows the power of prayer for vocations. I'm grateful I was here today."

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