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Diaconate Ordination of Liam Bradley at the Venerable English College, Rome



Liam Bradley commenced his studies for the priesthood, in 2004, at the 'Venerable' - the name by which the English College, in Rome, has been affectionally known by its students for many years.

Regular readers have since looked forward to the numerous articles which Liam has written for Menevia News - these have not only recorded his progress as a seminarian but have also given us an insight into life as a student and about many interesting facts of 'the holy city' itself.

On the 14th July this year Liam was ordained to the 'Sacred Order of the Diaconate'. Bishop John Arnold, an auxiliary bishop of Westminster, ordained Liam for our Diocese of Menevia in a very memorable and moving Ordination Mass.

Liam's ordination actually took place in Palazzola, the summerhouse of the Venerable English College. Overlooking the volcanic Lake Albano and Castel Gandolfo, the location itself in spectacular enough but is even more impressive when you learn that the history of the villa goes back to the Roman Empire: Within the grounds of the villa itself there is a large tomb dedicated to the memory of a Roman General.

Liam's journey to ordination has not been quick, but by his own admission, time has flown by! He first came to the diocese ten years ago as a student of Chemical Engineering at Swansea University where he spent four years completing a Masters degree. He quickly got involved with university life and was a very active member of the Catholic Society - in his penultimate year he became the president of the society, and, with the help of the Chaplain, Sr Nora Ryan, managed to secure some additional funding for the society from the university. In the final year of his engineering studies he became involved with a research project and spent two days a week working at the INCO nickel metal works in Clydach. He is on record as saying that this work and what he learnt in heavy industry has been invaluable for helping him on his summer pastoral placements.

It was as a student at university that Liam made contact with Canon Michael Flook, the then Vocations Director for Menevia. Canon Flook met with Liam several times and organised an interview for him, with the bishop and also with a panel of five representatives of the diocese. It was Bishop Mark Jabalé who finally accepted Liam as a seminarian for the diocese and Bishop Mark sent him to the seminary in Valladolid to start his training. A year later bishop Mark transferred him to the Venerable English College in Rome.

Liam has now been in Rome for six years where he has spent two years studying philosophy and three years learning theology. He has just completed the first year of



Liam, just ordained takes his place on the bishop's right

a two-year course of specialist studies in moral theology and will return to Rome in October to complete his final year of this course.

The day of Liam's Ordination was, he said, one he'll never forget. It was a baking hot day and the sun didn't stop shining, even for a moment. Two days before the ordination his family had all arrived in Rome and they joined the seminary community for the ordination Mass and lunch. While he was born in Cheltenham (and still calls that town his home) Liam also has a large family from Northern Ireland, many of whom also made the trip to Rome to be with him. In all 25 members of his close family joined 10 or so of his friends, both clerical and lay for the big day. The diocese was represented by Frs Michael Burke, himself an old-boy of the college, and Phillip Harries, the new Vocations Director of Menevia. It was during the ordination Mass that they dressed Liam in the vestments of the deacon, having first been presented with them by Liam's parents Hugh and Louise. Not only were his parents involved in the liturgy, but so too were his brother and twin sister, Paul and Gemma. They brought the gifts of bread and wine to the bishop who then passed them to Liam so he could, for the first time, prepare the altar for the Eucharistic part of the Mass. During the homily bishop John Arnold spoke directly to Liam but invited the entire congregation to 'listen in'. After the homily Liam made various promises to live a life of celibacy, to pray the prayers of the church daily and also promised respect and obedience to Thomas Burns, the bishop of Menevia.

The music for the Mass was a mix of traditional and modern. The college Schola sang 'If ye love me' in four parts by Thomas Tallis, and the Mass Setting was the Latin Missa de Agelis. The Psalm was very original, being as it was written especially for Liam by one of his brother students. Furthermore another student of the college had arranged an organ and trumpet voluntary for the final procession out of the chapel. The litany of saints was very important to Liam and he'd chosen saints that not only had significance to him but also meant something to each

member of his family, his close friends and to places which Liam has been to - there was a wide mixture of both English and Welsh saints as well as a mixing of old and new.

After Mass many photos were taken to remember the day (see left and below, with more photos on Page 3) before a four-course lunch was served in the grounds of the Villa. Towards the end of the meal, the Rector of the college, Mgr Nicholas Hudson made a speech to all present and gave Liam a letter from Pope Benedict XVI and a set of rosary beads blessed by him. The now Reverend Liam made a return speech in which he thanked all who had contributed to the liturgy. He also presented the Rector and Fr Michael Burke with a cake because exactly 25 years' earlier their ordination meal had to be abandoned owing to a forest fire - they had both missed out on their dessert and with the presentation of the cake the debt was finally paid! At least during Liam's meal no fires threatened to destroy the Villa!



With his family - l to r - Dad Hugh, sister Gemma, Rev Liam, Bishop John, Mother Louise and brother Paul

In his speech Liam made reference to one of his favourite prayers in the Divine Office: "I thank You for bringing me to this day with the gift of faith intact." Liam sees his faith as one of God's greatest graces to him, a faith that was learned at a child from his Mum and Dad and also from his grandparents. "It is because" he said "that we have been given the gift of faith, that we can all come together in this place to celebrate not only my ordination, but the faith of all of us and the faith of the Church. It is on this day that we should give thanks, not only for a new deacon, but that we have all been given the precious gift of faith."

After the ordination lunch the staff and students of the college left for the UK and gave Liam and his family an extra two days to enjoy Palazzola and relax in the sun. Liam will be working in the diocese with Fr Neil Evans in St Benedict's parish in Swansea during September before he returns to Rome for his final year. We pray that all goes well for his studies and that he will be ordained a priest in the not-to-distant future.