Service of Ordination to the Diaconate, Christ Church Cathedral, 20th September 2020.

Leonard Madden and Alistair Doyle.

Readings : Isa 6:1-8, Ps 119:33-38, Rom 12:1-12, Mk 10:35-45.

May the words that I speak, and the meditations of all our hearts,

be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I; send me!”.

I would like to begin, by welcoming Alistair and Leonard, and all their family and friends; on this their special day, here to the Cathedral Church of Christ.

When I was coerced, sorry I meant to say, offered the privilege,

of preaching this morning, I asked of fellow clergy, “how should I preach”.

The consensus of opinion can be distilled into three sentences.

Keep it short.

Keep it to the point

And leave them wanting more.

So, I shall endeavour over the allotted one hour sermon time, to comply with these three aims and goals.

If I may abuse Mr. Dickens esq, when he said:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,

It is very strange times indeed”;

I feel it is into this description of our times today, that Alistair and Leonard, find themselves being ordained to the diaconate.

During the past week, I have being trying to picture what it must be like for Alistair and Leonard, as they begin a new chapter in the ‘Book of their Lives’, in these challenging times for not only us as human beings, but also as a living, breathing, organic church.

Are Alistair and Leonard, as they stand on the cusp of their new futures,

like the Spanish explorer, Cortez, who on a peak in Darien, saw a land of opportunity, laid out at his feet.

A land to be introduced, as he saw it, to the eternal saving grace of the one true God.

By prayer and action, the peoples of Mexico and the Americas, would be brought to Christ and the church of Christianity.

While I have no doubt that the parishes of Kilternan and Blessington are lands of beauty and opportunity, the vision of them dripping in Aztec gold may be a bit too ambitious.

Our three readings this morning, certainly give us a flavour of where Alistair and Leonard could be in their walk in God’s company.

In Isaiah, we are told that no matter what our life’s history is, when we are confronted with the question of following God and carrying out his bidding;

because of God’s forgiveness of our sins, our guilt has departed and our sins are blotted out.

Which then by its nature, enables us to make the statement;

“here am I, send me”

St. Paul then goes on to tell us what the new life in Christ will be like,

when we present our bodies to be holy and acceptable to God, as a living sacrifice.

In doing so, we as individuals with our own unique talents and abilities,

come to understand that, although we are many, we are one body in Christ.

The gifts and talents of Alistair and Leonard, whether they be in leadership,

in teaching, in ministry; will be subsumed into the Body of Christ, enriching it, promoting it, and in the vision of God in his temple in the Book of Isaiah,

will become part of God’s glory, which fills the earth..

St. Paul goes further with his inclusion of what marks us out as true Christians. Among the marks of true Christianity are letting our love be genuine, being ardent in spirit and persevering in prayer.

These traits are admirable to strive for, in the pursuit of faithfulness to God.

But as in all things, they carry a hazardous warning label, as personified by the brothers Zebedee.

James and John, having figured out that they had the inside track with Jesus, had presumed that because they were doing what was right in the sight of Jesus,

that they had earned the right to dictate to Jesus and his Father,

where they should be positioned when they entered the kingdom of heaven.

As we all know, Jesus put them straight.

And in doing so, reminded us that once we are ordained to the diaconate, once we become servants, we never lose that privilege.

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,

and to give his life a ransom for many”

Jesus is pulling no punches, servanthood can mean death.

At the beginning I said that I had visions of Alistair and Leonard as the Spanish explorer Cortez, but I have dismissed that vision.

Instead, following much thought, with coffee; I believe that Alistair and Leonard are more like James Tiberius Kirk, as he stands on the deck of the Starship Enterprise.

Their ongoing mission, like that of Capt. Kirk, is to explore new worlds, seek out new life, boldly go where no one has gone before.

For Alistair and Leonard, this vision could be to approach their parish placements as an opportunity to explore new avenues of faith expression.

To be fearless in approaching other worship communities, to learn from them, and to bring that learning and introduce it into their own expression of faith, enhancing and enriching their journey with God.

To Alistair and Leonard I say, do not be afraid to boldly go where no one has gone before.

To their parishes I say, allow your clergy to explore and to grow in the faith,

because the riches they will bring back, will enable in these strange and wonderful times, for our parishes and the church as a whole, will help us to organically grow, to thrive as a worshipping community; to be better servants not only in our church, but also to those in need around us in God’s created world.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I; send me!”.

And so may the words that I have spoken, reach the ears of those who are able to listen. In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.