

# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS

**Roque Dias – “Being a deacon is being of service.”**

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Catholic Outlook  
Diocese of Parramatta

Roque Dias’s ordination to the permanent diaconate will be a continuation of his life of service to others.

“Being a deacon is being of service. Father Chris de Souza [Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar for Education and Formation, Diocese of Parramatta] said to me that although ministry is part of what a deacon does, a deacon should be someone who sits in the messiness of people’s lives,” Roque said.

Roque, as well as John Cinya, Thong Nguyen and Roderick Pirotta will be ordained to the diaconate on 22 February 2019 at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Parramatta.

Roque and his wife Gemma, who celebrated their 26<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in October, met through mutual friends when they both worked for the Oberoi Hotel chain in Mumbai, India.

“Coming from a staunch Catholic family where we have a lot of people in religious life, my mother was always insistent that if I get married, it would be to a Catholic.

“Before we were married, Gemma and I committed ourselves every Wednesday for a year of devotion to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at her church in Mumbai.”

Roque has always worked in hospitality serving others. He has worked for many five-star hotels and corporations in India and Australia, often working long hours and through the holiday season.

Roque started his journey to the permanent diaconate ten years ago while he, Gemma and their son Gerard were parishioners at St Andrew the Apostle Parish, Marayong.

“I was handed a flyer by one of our friends about a seminar that was being run through the Diocese of Broken Bay. I read it and discerned and thought about it and I decided to go.

“[American] Deacon Harold Burke-Siver was the key speaker at the seminar. It was a full-day, and I waited for hours after it finished to have a face-to-face chat with him.

“I told him that I’d been discerning something like what you had explained and if it was possible for me. And he said ‘of course, why not?’.

“He instilled in me that if you have this vocation, to pray about it and just go for it.”

The next step for Roque was to determine if he could manage his call to vocation will full-time employment.

“I worked as a corporate catering supervisor, then as a manager, at Ernst & Young for ten years, but then I got this call to vocation to become a deacon.

“I spoke to my manager [at Ernst & Young] about my vocation, but she couldn’t understand as she was coming from a corporate world.

“I was also in conversation with my spiritual director Sister Margaret Jennings at Blacktown who said ‘Roque, what is more important to you?’

“Bishop Anthony Fisher was insistent on those wanting to join the diaconate to have a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and theology. When I was working full-time, I couldn’t manage work and study.

“So, in long discussions with Gemma, she said if I was interested in fulfilling my vocation, I would probably have to give up work, and she would support me 100%.”

Roque now volunteers as a pastoral care volunteer at Blacktown and Westmead Hospitals, where he hopes to continue working once ordained.

“I’ve been working in hospitals for two-and-a-half years. I’ve seen the best and the worst. I’ve seen people die in front of me. When I come home, it gives me great joy. I’m happy because I’ve brought Jesus to them.”

Roque said he always had the support of his family in his vocation, with Gemma being a strength during his eight years of formation.

“Gemma always knew that I wanted to be of service to God and his church because she knew of my seminary background.

“I have supported him all the way through, in spite of my busy work schedule. I’ve been going with him to every formation session and every retreat. I’ve given priority to this vocation, despite my job,” Gemma added.

“For the last eight years, Gemma has always been at my side. She is a source of inspiration. There were some really hard times during my formation and she encouraged me to keep going, to keep persisting,” Roque said.

“My family always supported me in my calling. When my son Gerard was in high school, I told him that I was joining the diaconate, he said ‘Dad, as long as it’s what you want to do, I will support you 100%, as long as you are happy.’”

In what he calls an “exciting phase in the church’s history,” one of the challenges Roque sees in his diaconate is the role that deacons play in the church.

“The Pope and our own Bishop Vincent Long tells us that deacons have a special role to play in the church.

“Bishop Vincent has come to a few of our formation sessions, and we have been impressed by his understanding of the role of a deacon in that they have a special role to play.

“Bishop Vincent has given a deacon the task of organising a parish, and I see that as a challenge to me.

“What role will I play in the Diocese of Parramatta?”

“Bishop Vincent is giving a lot of responsibility to deacons, more than any bishop has done before. So it’s going to be a challenge for Roque and for the new deacons to take on that role,” Gemma said.

“My ordination will make a very significant difference to our lives as both husband and wife. Just as I said my vows on my wedding day, it will be the same for my ordination into the diaconate. This is going to be another great sacrament that I will participate in”, Roque said.

“It will change my life. My marriage changed my life, and so will holy orders.”

When asked about what advice he would give other men wishing to join the permanent diaconate, Roque stressed the importance of prayer.

“My advice is to pray. Prayer is the foundation. Pray daily. I pray because there are times where I don’t know what God wants me to do.

“Be persistent and don’t give up.

“Have a supportive wife and a good spiritual director whom you can go to in good times and bad.

“You are the only person who stands in your way.”



