

## **Ordination to the Holy Priesthood of Deacon Prof. Krastu Nikita Banev**



On Saturday, 30th December 2023, Deacon Prof. Krastu Nikita Banev was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at the Church of the Three Hierarchs in Leeds. His Grace Bishop Raphael presided during Matins and celebrated the Divine Liturgy. Amongst those concelebrating were the V. Revd Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne Dr. Antonios Kakalis, the V. Revd Archimandrite Meletiy Spassov, vice-dean of Sofia Theological Seminary (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), the Revd Protopresbyter Christos Stephanou, the Revd Protopresbyter John Nankivell, the Revd Protopresbyter John Jookway, the Revd Protopresbyter Dr. Dobromir Dimitrov, the Revd Oeconomos Nicholas Karafillides, the Revd Oeconomos Michael Petrakis, Priest-in-charge and the Revd Presbyter Dionisios-James Higgs. Archdeacon Dr. George Tsourous as well as Deacons Symeon Menne, and Gregorios Craveiro served. Prior to the ordination, Ioannis Petrakis was elevated by His Grace Raphael

to the order of Readers.

Also present were the Rev. Oeconomos Andreas Amirhom (Newcastle), Revd Archpriest Stephen Platt (Oxford) and Revd Archpriest Prof Andrew Louth (Durham) from the Russian Orthodox Church (Diocese of Sourozh), Revd Dr. Justin Mihoc (Durham) from the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Revd Paul Kronbergs (Middlesbrough) and the Revd Canon Dr. Alan Bartlett (Durham) from the Anglican Church, as well as Revd Presbyter Beshoy Karam from the Coptic Cathedral of St. George and St. Athanasios (Newcastle), along with Prof. Jane Heath (Durham University).

In his ordination speech, Fr Nikita reflected on his spiritual journey throughout his life and expressed profound gratitude to God for the divine call to the ordained ministry of Priesthood. He extended heartfelt thanks to His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas, for guiding him in discerning the right time to take the first step toward the Holy Altar. Father Nikita also conveyed his appreciation to His Grace Bishop Raphael, recalling their initial meeting at the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex during 1999-2000 when he was still a student.

Father Nikita also expressed his deep gratitude to Fr. John and Georgina Nankivell, whom he first met during the same period and who have remained close friends. He extended a sincere thank you to Fr. Meletiy, who represented his home country and Bulgarian family. Father Nikita also thanked the Community in Leeds for their warm welcome, noting that it was at this very church that he was initially ordained as a reader by the late Archbishop Gregorios in January 2007. He also expressed his profound appreciation to his dear wife, Esther, and their children, Liliana-Maria, Anastasia, and Symeon, for wholeheartedly embracing their new life as a clergy family.

In closing, Father Nikita acknowledged his role as a Priest is to lead the people of God in the greatest act of thanksgiving, the Eucharist, where the Church gathers to give thanks and noted the importance of giving thanks, even in challenging times.

In his address to Deacon Nikita, Bishop Raphael noted that Nikita's life was about to undergo a transformative change, taking on new meaning and beauty as he prepared to be ordained as a Priest. Bishop Raphael highlighted Nikita's well-rounded preparation, growing up in a devout Orthodox Christian environment, living a pious life, and receiving guidance from dedicated clergymen. He also acknowledged Nikita's family, his worthy wife, and good children who would provide support and inspiration on his journey. Bishop Raphael emphasised that, through the Archbishop's call, Fr. Nikita was not a foreigner in the Church but an

integral part of the Archdiocese's family, working together to welcome more people to the faith. In conclusion, Bishop Raphael wished for Nikita's priestly service to be so impactful that people encountering him would affirm the truth of the Gospel and conveyed his blessings for Nikita's journey in the priesthood, praying for a path filled with grace, devotion, and inspiration for all those Nikita would encounter in his ministry.

The close-knit community in Leeds, under the guidance of Fr. Michael Petrakis, Priest-in-charge, President Kostas Karakoussis and the Parish Council, as well as the co-ordinator Mr Irineos Livadiotes, orchestrated a truly splendid reception in celebration of the ordination. This event seamlessly accommodated nearly 200 guests. The delicious meal prepared by the talented cook, Mr. Nikolaos Tagkatidis and volunteers, added an extra layer of warmth and flavour to the gathering. It provided an extraordinary opportunity for guest from across the UK and members of the Leeds community to come together and witness the ordination of Fr. Nikita. Against the backdrop of the ordination, attendees relished the chance to also exchange warm greetings for the New Year.



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