Rev Joshua Pollard, who still holds a pilot's licence, speaks about his journey to ordination.
A former airline pilot who saw the ‘face of Christ’ in the people he met after landing in some of the poorest areas of the world has been ordained a deacon.

Rev Joshua Pollard worked for easyJet and then Virgin Atlantic over 11 years after qualifying as a pilot when he was 21 years old. He flew to European destinations and later on long haul routes all over the world, including the Caribbean, the US, Africa and India.

“People used to ask me ‘can you see heaven when you are pilot?’ and I would answer ‘frankly no’,” he said.

“Wherever I was going – and sometimes we were flying to some pretty tough and poor places, with people living in real hardship - it was through the people that I could see the face of Christ.

“It was not so much seeing heaven in the skies as in the faith of the people that I met once I had landed.”

Rev Pollard whose favourite motto is that of the Carthusians ‘Stat crux dum volvit orbis’ - ‘the cross stands while the world turns’ – spoke of his long period of discernment before he decided at the age of 30 to train for the priesthood at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield, West Yorkshire.

“I knew that God was calling me when I was 19 years old but I did not know for what. I was pretty sure at that time that it was not the priesthood. After some years I realised that as much as I loved flying – and I still love flying – God was calling me to the priesthood.”

He added that aviation staff set an example in their support for each other and collaborative working practices.

“What I have learned from the world of aviation is the necessity to be part of a team and of course to build one another up. I think sometimes, that is where the Church needs to learn,” he said.

Rev Pollard has started work as an Assistant Curate at St Alban the Martyr in South Norwood, London. He contrasted the food bank work at his church with his previous life as a pilot.

“I would sometimes eat caviar while flying across around the world – where there was surplus from serving the Premier passengers. Here at the food bank we are trying to feed people who can't even afford a tin of baked beans.”
Rev Joshua Pollard was among a group of 20 men and women ordained as deacons at Southwark Cathedral on June 24.