



**Homily – Ordination of Deacons**  
**May 31, 2008**  
 Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
 Archbishop of San Antonio

My brother priests, deacons, candidates to be ordained, sisters and brothers in Christ:

Today we celebrate the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we pray in the Liturgy of the Hours: “O God, you sent the Blessed Virgin Mary to visit her cousin Elizabeth and to share with her the joy of your Son’s coming”.

“A visitation is an encounter that carries within it a meaning that is exceptional. In the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that meaning is not a ‘message’ but rather the exceptional presence of the Son she carries within her womb” (Magnificat, 5/31/08).

And we gather for the ordination of Deacons in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. On the last day of the month of May, the Month of Mary, we feel the visitation of Mary in a special way to each one of you bringing her Son that you can have a more personal encounter with Him as you receive the ordination as Deacons.

With the ordination to the Diaconate you are called to serve the people of God in communion with the Bishop and his priests” (Cf. LG, 29). As the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, reminded us in his Apostolic trip to the USA, the mission of a Bishop is to “lead his people to ‘an encounter with the living God’, the source of that life-transforming hope of which the Gospel speaks (cf. Spe Salvi, 4)”.

Then, as collaborators of the Bishop and Priests, you have the same mission of Mary and the Apostles to bring Christ to the people of God!

It is then a providential coincidence that we are celebrating your ordination on this beautiful feast day. Mary, Our Blessed Mother, will be the best model and intercessor of your new ministry in the Church!

Let me just point out to you two brief points from today’s readings.  
 First of all from the 1<sup>st</sup> reading of today’s Mass, your ministry is a vocation, a call from God.

You have a personal call from God to serve Him as deacons. “The Christian vocation is always a renewal of this personal friendship with Jesus Christ, which gives full meaning to our lives and makes us open to the Kingdom of God” (Pope Benedict XVI, 5/7/06).

It is important to notice that “those designated for ordination are not representatives or delegates of the Christian community; they are ministers of God. They have received a calling and, by the imposition of hands, God -not men- gives them a spiritual power which equips them to govern the Christian community, make and administer the sacraments and preach the Word” (NB, Acts 6, 4).

Yes, you have a call to love and serve God and His people. The 2<sup>nd</sup> reading gives you a simple and practical road map for your new ministry: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor...practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be *arrogant*, but associate with the *poor*”.

My brothers, it sounds easy but we know that it is not. It was not easy for Mary, our Blessed Mother to go visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth. But, she did it! She went out of her way to be of service to her. What a beautiful example for each one of you and for all of us!

We, the clergy, have been entrusted with the “ministry of reconciliation”... Living as children of the Father who is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4), we must be apostles of reconciliation in a world that is angry and violent, in a culture of blame and revenge...

For the love of God we have to love our neighbors. We have to show our love in concrete works of mercy—welcoming the immigrant, healing the brokenhearted, raising up the lowly, fighting for the unborn and the family.” Just as I wrote in my pastoral letter ‘The Tender Mercy of Our God’.

It is a ministry that you are called to live in your families and parishes: a joyful call to bring the goods news of salvation, mercy and love to the people of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

Today, as you receive the grace of Ordination to the Diaconate, you can rejoice with St. Elizabeth with the special presence of Jesus and Mary in your lives and with the humility of Mary, who proclaims ‘the greatness of the Lord’ ... “my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant ... the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name ...”

To Mary, our Blessed Mother, we pray that your ministry among us will be a ‘new visitation’; that you will have the grace to bring people to a personal encounter with the living Christ! Amen.