

Homily – Permanent Diaconate Ordination, Del Rio

May 26, 2018

This is a day of great joy for the candidates and their wives, their teachers and formators, their pastors and parishioners – for the entire Archdiocese of San Antonio! We are very grateful to their wives for sharing their husbands with us and accompanying them in this demanding formation program.

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word meaning service. What kind of service? In today’s second reading we hear that the original seven deacons were Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. Their initial responsibility was helping to care for the widows of that community. But, we also encounter Stephen and Philip proclaiming the gospel and baptizing. Clearly there is more to the diaconate than at first meets the eye.

The Second Vatican Council stressed a threefold diaconal ministry: of the Word, of the altar, and of charity. If a deacon is to be an authentic sign of the Servant-Christ – who is prophet, priest, and king – his diaconal ministry must include all three dimensions. This does not mean, however, that he must give equal time to all three. The needs of the community, the deacon’s own specific competence,

and the guidance of the Church's pastors will help him decide how to use his resources wisely and effectively.

Serving as a deacon demands self-sacrifice and compassion. We just heard that Jesus went from place to place proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. "At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with compassion for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd."

Following Jesus means serving others, especially the most vulnerable among us. It means being willing to let go of an image of self-importance in order to enter into the paschal mystery – which includes both the Cross and the resurrection. It means loving others as Jesus does – fully, faithfully, holding nothing back – not performing in order to be seen and esteemed by others.

My brothers, you are undergoing a transformation in the celebration of this Sacrament of Holy Orders. Strive to live in such a way that you will produce much good fruit. We will call down upon you the Holy Spirit to empower you to do this and give you his sevenfold gifts. May Our Lady, the Mother of the Church, be at your side and help you in this vital ministry of the Church!