

Homily – Permanent Diaconate Ordination

June 16, 2018

This is a wonderful 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 the 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? As we heard, the original seven deacons were Greek-speaking Christians. They were chosen to help care for the widows of that community. But later, Stephen and Philip proclaim the gospel and baptize. Clearly there is more to the diaconate than at first meets the eye.

This year we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of the permanent diaconate in the United States. 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. You are to proclaim the word of God faithfully. You are to assist in the sacramental life of the Church. You are to serve others, especially the most vulnerable among us, in imitation of the Good Shepherd. Like Jeremiah, you may hesitate in accepting these demanding responsibilities. God promises to be with you always.

You must be 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. As we heard in the gospel, we are to love 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 this Sacrament of Holy Orders. We will call down upon you the Holy Spirit to empower you as deacons and give you his sevenfold gifts. May Our Lady, Mother of the Church, be ever at your side and help you in this vital ministry of the Church!